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TO THE READER

If you are interested only in the Poland of to-day, you should begin with Chapter XIV. Those who care only about the Poland of 1939 should begin with Chapter IX. If you want to know what has happened since 1918, then begin with Chapter V.

Chapter IV will tell you how the Poland of to-day came into being. Those who want to know where it came from, will begin with Chapter I.

The whole book has been written in too short a time, and under too great pressure to be as balanced as it ought to be. My one wish has been to keep it free from major errors in fact. For any and every view expressed, unless otherwise stated, the author alone is responsible.

W. J. R.

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PART ONE
THE PAST

CHAPTER I

POLAND—WHERE, WHY AND WHAT ?

POLAND is the country of the Poles, just as England is that of the English, or Finland that of the Finns. Everyone must have a home to live in, though the names of countries do not always give us any clue as to the character of the inhabitants. In the case of the Poles, we have one. By the generally accepted etymology, they are the people of the open fields, or of the plains (Polish *pole*—field). In this case, though not exclusively, they are those of the river Vistula and its tributaries.

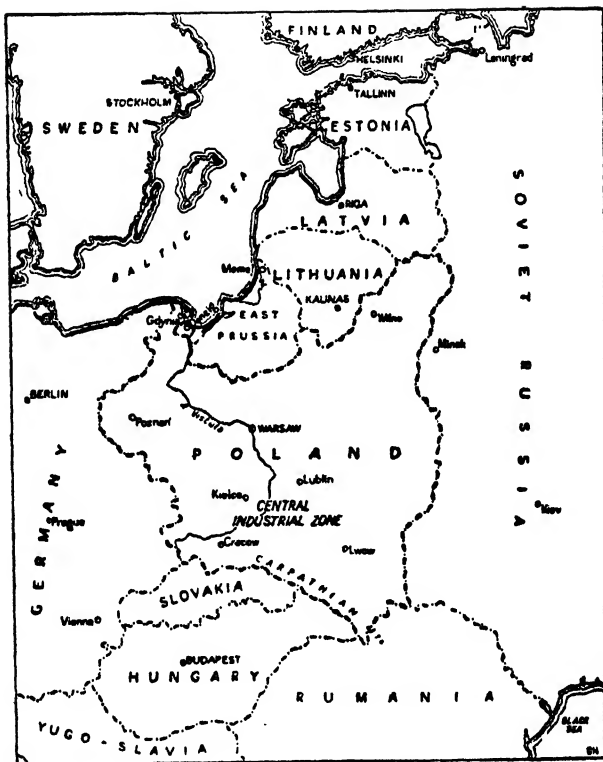
A well-known Cambridge man used to say that if you stood on the hills of Gog and Magog and looked due east, there was nothing significant for the eye to rest on until you reached the Ural mountains. It is quite true that the whole of Northern Europe, leaving aside the Scandinavian peninsula, is a vast expanse of lowlands, once the bed of the sea, and now drained by a series of rivers which rise in the Alps and the Carpathians—the back-bone of the continent. Of this ancient sea only the Baltic is left, and into it flow three of the rivers in question, the Oder, the Vistula, and the Niemen. Over these broad flat-lands, which—be it observed, lay quite outside the orbit of Roman civilisation, more or less nomadic peoples milled back and forth for thousands of years, their main thrust being westward and south. In the early centuries of our era, what we now call the Slav races were pressing on the heels of the Germanic peoples, and occupying with loose village or tribal communities almost everything as far west as the Elbe. By the seventh century a reaction had set in, which was reinforced after Charlemagne's day; and for generations the fiercest

of conflicts went on, culminating in the recovery by the Germans of much they had lost. The lower Oder became theirs again, but behind it the Slavs made a stand. It was here, in the lake district between the Oder and the Vistula that the beginnings of a Polish state organisation—the founding of a “kingdom”, took place. Exactly when, no one knows, nor does it matter. No records were kept until the coming of Christianity, and the reducing of speech to paper, in the tenth century.

The traditional date for the crowning of the first Polish king is A.D. 962. He probably thought of himself as a vassal of the Holy Roman emperor, but his very able successor, Boleslas I, proved to be a crusader of the first rank, extended his realm south and east in campaigns against Czech and Russian, and freed himself from all overlordship from the west. His personality made possible a sort of absolute monarchy, based on a loose feudal relationship of regional princes and nobles, but his successors could not maintain this. His grandson, Boleslas the Bold, recovered some lost ground, and is notable for being the first king to make his home on the upper Vistula, in the already famous fortress-town of Cracow.

Again came a period of disruption, till a third king of the same name, reigning from 1102–1138, carried further the task of ensuring his kingdom's place on the map; in particular by subjecting the Baltic coast-line. All these gains were thrown away, however, when, on dying, he divided his lands among his four sons. For two centuries the hope of “national” unity was broken. Not until 1325, after the country had been ruled for a time by the Czech king Wenceslas, was a sovereign Polish prince again crowned as lord of a united people—this time on Wawel Hill, the citadel of Cracow.

So much, in order that we may see clearly where Poland lies on the map. Roughly it represented the plain reaching from the Central Carpathians to the Baltic Sea. The upper



and middle Oder and its tributary the Warta, together with the Vistula and its system, drained the whole. Like France, it has a *Massif Central*, the St. Cross Hills in the elbow of the Vistula; but apart from this there is nothing but plain and forest land until one reaches the foothills of the Carpathians. We shall see how, in later centuries, colonisation movements went eastward and left these lands, just as they left the denser German areas of the west. There was this difference, however, that while most of the Germans settled in towns, the Poles, both of upper and lower strata of society, remained on the land, and were soon lords of great estates as far away as the Dnieper. In general Poland's rulers, as time went on, were to be torn between two lines of expansion. The easier way lay toward the east, which afforded more "living-room", exploited the rich soil of the areas toward the Black Sea, and formed a sort of buffer against Tartar and Turk. The harder way was toward the north-west, for it was disputed by the Germans; but it was necessary if the nation was to have an outlet to the sea. It will be seen how all this was affected by the union with Lithuania, begun in 1386 and completed two centuries later. Now rises the vital question: what was it that made Poland Poland? What features marked its people as distinctive from their neighbours? In other words, why a Polish nation? The answer is abundantly clear.

On the west there was the deep difference of speech. Polish is a Slavonic tongue, as distinct from German as the latter is from French. Further, there were the accumulating hostilities between neighbour stocks which soon became something like a racial antagonism; giving rise in time to a proverb declaring brotherly relations between German and Pole as unthinkable. On the south-west the Moravian Gate was the natural frontier between Polish and Czech peoples, although this was modified politically in 1335, when the upper Oderland (Silesia) was ceded by the Polish king to Bohemia. On the south were the Carpathian mountains, as natural a frontier as the Pyrenees, and much longer. Only on the east were

there less robust distinctions. Here, even to-day, one has to speak rather of a frontier belt than of any line (I leave out the political frontier for a moment). Language differences did, and do exist, though far less striking than toward the west. There is no natural barrier anywhere, save the Prypiet Marshlands in the very centre of the great plain. But culture gave what nature had not offered. On the east the frontier of Poland is one of religion.

The peoples which were in time to be known as Muscovy, and later as Imperial Russia, had their Christian faith from Constantinople, being what we know as Orthodox, and using the Greek rite. The Poles, by one of those chances that can mean so much in history, were converted into the Western Church, having their faith from Rome. They thus developed a way of thinking and living that was an integral part of Latin Christianity, and most easterly people in Europe (except the Lithuanians) to do so. Not that things were as clear-cut here as with the Czechs or the Germans; for the very fact of a wide open frontier toward the slowly shaping power of Orthodox Russia was not without certain consequences. But the undeniable instinct that has made most peoples in Europe look westward rather than eastward for inspiration and example, became for Poland the guiding principle of her private and public life. Geographically her territories lay between the east and the west: having on the west the lands that bordered on and received direct nurture from the Roman tradition, and on the east those that looked rather to St. Sophia. What did bind her up with the east was her position on the overland trade routes from the Black Sea basin to the Baltic and the Atlantic sea-board. These ancient paths skirted the Carpathians, gave cities like Lwow (Lemberg—the Lion City), Cracow and Breslau their significance and made the infiltration of eastern influences inevitable.

On the north the natural frontier would have been the Baltic, but the Poles were never a sea-going people. What is more the whole coast-line east of the Vistula mouth was

occupied by riparian stocks of non-Slav origins and speaking non-Slavonic languages, which cut off the peoples of the plain from the sea. Only west of the Vistula did the Poles have a portion of the foreshore, and here it was disputed by the Germans. Two factors soon appeared which were to complicate the whole matter very seriously. German traders and artisans developed the chain of ports known as the Hansa towns right across northern Europe as far as Riga, thus securing a hold on the Baltic which was bound in time to have political consequences. Then came a less desirable, indeed sinister intruder, the Teutonic Knights of the Cross. Sent to convert the heathen Prussians, they turned their swords on all their neighbours—already Christian, and became the pioneers of German power all along the Baltic. These two factors, more than anything else, account for the difficulties of the Baltic coast problem to-day.

We thus see that "the land of the Poles" has had for a millennium a fairly clear meaning; something that was obvious long ago to the many visitors from outside. From the Hansa towns went travellers to inland points, certain of which became in time accepted trading centres, the homes of "fairs". In the more important of these, permanent colonies of foreigners soon grew up, traces of which remain in the names of streets to this day. Most general were Jews and Armenians, but Germans were numerous, and there were many Scots. Serving and prospering on the rural districts round about, and enjoying privileges from the king in respect of all transit trade, these communities nevertheless became in time wholly assimilated to their environment—a sure proof of the dynamic of Polish nationhood. Even the German immigrants to Warsaw of far later date (the eighteenth century) have long since almost to a man become Poles.

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We turn now to point three of our title. To the question what Poland is, the answer must be in figures. The restored commonwealth is about two-thirds the size of France, hav-

ing 150,000 square miles; and had a population at the end of the Great War of 27,000,000 souls. This put Poland in the fifth place among the European Powers, sixth if we include Soviet Russia. But that is only the beginning. In twenty years the population has risen by one quarter, and is now 34,500,000. As we shall see later on this almost abnormal birth-rate, when coupled with a declining death-rate, is a source of real anxiety to the authorities.

Of this total three-tenths belong to national minorities. In other words Poland is seven-tenths Polish, rather more if one reckons those Jews who think of themselves as Polish patriots. Of the four chief Minorities the Germans number less than a million, and are scattered literally all over the country. The White Russians (Ruthenians) living north of the Prypiet marshlands number about 1,500,000. They are a wholly peasant people, living in a fairly solid group, with a small Lithuanian and a much larger Polish population in their midst. Next in numbers come the Jews, who have only recently (as Zionists) declared themselves as a national Minority at all. They number 3,300,000, nearly one-tenth of the whole population, and are even more scattered than the Germans. Living almost exclusively in the towns, they have held for generations a virtual monopoly of petty trading and arts and crafts. How many of them really regard themselves as a nation it is impossible to say. Certain it is, that a very large part are much more concerned for religious observances than for anything else outside the daily living. Finally come the largest Minority, the Ukrainians (Ruthenians) living south of the Marshlands, numbering at least 5,000,000: the exact figure cannot be determined. Of this national group and its place in the country we shall say more below. Both the White Ruthenians and the Ukrainians are parts of larger ethnic units reaching out into Soviet Russia. In each case the majority are of Orthodox faith, but a strong minority is Catholic.

Of these non-Polish elements the Jews and the Germans are immigrants; their forefathers having come from abroad,

in some cases very long ago. They are thus not quite as much "native-born" as the Poles. Nevertheless, when ten or even twenty generations of your family have tilled the soil or pursued their trade in one spot, it is impossible to deny that you do "belong" there. And if the process of assimilation of non-Polish groups has not been as complete in Poland as, say, in the case of France, it should be remembered that even at the time of the Revolution France was far from homogeneous. Had Poland been free to develop her own life during the nineteenth century, many things would have been different than they are.

We shall have occasion more than once in these pages to emphasise the prevailing agricultural nature of Polish life and interests down the ages. Only to-day, after a serious time-lag, is this being changed. But culture is pre-eminently a thing of urban communities, and this was even truer in the Middle Ages than to-day. Apart from the influences of trade and industry for which law and order are essential if they are to live at all, the chief agency working for civilisation was the Church. On the one hand the secular clergy, who with the help of the princes and the burghers, built the parish church and cathedrals; on the other the monastic Orders, whose splendid work in Poland can parallel the services rendered by the Cistercians in Britain. Now it is noteworthy that the style of architecture in western and southern Poland apart from a few Romanesque churches that survive, is uniformly Gothic: while that of the East and the North, since they were not properly won for the faith until much later, is Renaissance and baroque. In this fact alone will be found a useful key to the course of events in Poland, both political and cultural.

The carriers of Christianity, naturally enough, came mostly from German and Czech countries. The reasons were those of geography, and what people had received from one direction they passed on in another. From this let no one argue, however, that the Poles owe all they have either to Germans or to any other source. Not only did

missionaries from French, Italian and Swiss homes share in the work, but the Poles themselves were not slow to go abroad to learn, and then come back to serve their own people. This interchange of cultural wares is the greatest mark of mediaeval civilisation, and for this reason it is not possible to speak of a distinctly Polish type of church architecture. One has only to look at St Mary's in Cracow, then go on to great churches of Breslau, study further St John's in Torun, and finally take a look at St Mary's in Danzig in order to see what I mean. Apart from times of special tension, there was little of national patriotism before the Renaissance, and there can be no talk of national cultures. The single pattern of living was that of Latin Christianity, and each people lived this in its own way. There were important differences, e.g. the highly characteristic social organisation known as Feudalism was never achieved in Poland as in the west. All the same, there, as elsewhere, one did at least have the elements of a "static" society, in that most people died in the station into which they were born. Roughly speaking, in Poland also there were those who fought, those who prayed, and those who toiled, the last-named being by far the largest group. As time went on, it became increasingly apparent, both to themselves and to others, that they were a distinct nation, doing things and speaking *po polsku*—in the Polish way! Their living and thinking were European, but had a mark all their own.

Thus we can see how, during generations, the regional groups, call them tribes or clans or by any other name, inhabiting the territories indicated, were moulded by the processes of history into what came to be known as the Polish state and nation. It used a single speech—the so-called St Cross Sermons of the thirteenth century are a very early witness to this fact, and used it with slight variations from the sea to the mountains. A body of common traditions was formed, and common aspirations were acknowledged. In spite of invasions from all sides, including the flooding of the country by the Swedes in the seventeenth century, something like unity and identity prevailed.

Further, not even the blow of the Partitions, which put an end altogether to the state, could avail to change this. At every moment, and over a steadily growing area, this people were conscious of being Poles, and Poles they are to-day.

CHAPTER II

THE MAKING OF THE NATION

The Upward Trend

AN eminent authority has suggested that the eight century long history of the kingdom of Poland may be divided roughly into three parts of almost equal length. The first and second were periods of advance, the third one of decline.

During the first we have a pattern of living shaped by the forces of Christianity. It began after the middle of the tenth century, and was marked by the founding of the monasteries and abbeys by the Catholic Orders, by the introduction of a written language, the beginnings of organised political power, and the entrance of Poland as a state into the arena of European affairs. First one prince, then another, proved himself a leader in war and conquest, and most of the lands later to form "the commonwealth of nobles" came to know the passage of Polish armies. In this period fell two events of unusual interest: a conflict between the state and the church not unlike that leading to the murder of Becket in England, the victim of which was the Bishop of Cracow, later canonised as Patron saint of Poland, St Stanislas; and a dividing of the realm among four sons, recovery from which was slow and arduous. It ended in the miseries of the Tartar invasions from the east in the thirteenth century, and in the expansion of town life and culture, chiefly thanks to the help of German immigrant groups.

The second period is that of the ascendancy of urban life and influence, and is marked by achievements which are a worthy parallel of what was going on in neighbouring

countries to the west. Polish cities became noted as the meeting-places for traders from east and west, owing much of their wealth to the fact that the Mediterranean was a battle-ground between the Crescent and the Cross, and that the longer sea-route to the Orient was still unknown. Like western towns they were organised on the basis of the *jus teutonicum*, had their own municipal councils, their merchants and arts and crafts guilds, their imposing cathedrals and parish churches, their schools, and of course their shops and their homes. Many of them had broad squares, distinguished by imposing town halls, and walled fortifications of astonishing dimensions. One of them, Cracow, followed the example of Prague and Vienna and nurtured a university, which played a notable role during the days of the New Learning, attracting scholars from every country in Europe.

In not a few cases worthy remains of these splendid buildings, both sacred and secular, have survived, as well as of city walls scarcely inferior to those of Nürnberg or Carcassone. But old sketches and prints have been rescued, which give us a far more adequate conception of what the strength and pride of that burgher age must have been. Similar evidence, of quite a different kind, can be found from a study of ancient documents on parchment such as the charters of the Guilds or other "patents" secured from kings and princes. One thing alone, the list of *incunabula*, meaning the books printed in Polish towns before 1500, would suffice to show that they were not a whit behind their neighbours in western Europe. It was in the middle of these times of urban prosperity that the union of Poland with Lithuania was effected, of which more below. Toward the end came the mighty changes associated everywhere with the New Learning and the Reformation.

The period of decline can be said to date roughly from 1565, though the seeds were sown earlier. The landed nobility, including both the modest squires and the powerful land barons, had become more and more jealous of the rising wealth and influence of the towns, and set about compassing their downfall. With a shortsightedness that

amazes the student of to-day they carried their schemes to completion, and the results were disastrous to the whole nation. Almost every trace of the middle class that must always be the most precious possession of any healthy social order was wiped out. The cultural and economic backbone of the state and the nation was broken. The result was that, in spite of valiant efforts made by a few men after 1740 to save the situation, Poland became the prey of predatory neighbours and succumbed before long to the Partitions. From these she did not emerge and again achieve unification until after the Great War. Social processes did indeed go on, although in the face of terrible obstacles. The transition to modern conditions was not altogether interrupted, but it was sadly delayed. We shall look first at certain notable features of the years of development, and then at the time of unhappy decline. The story must of necessity be much simplified, and the reader is referred to the histories recommended for a fuller account.

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We have noted that something like national unity was recovered after long disruption early in the fourteenth century. From 1333–1370 Poland had a king who deserved the name given him, Casimir the Great. It is said of him that he found his country of wood, and he left it of stone. This is only a graphic way of describing a series of material improvements, both in town and country, which transformed the whole face of things. Like no one before him, Casimir interested himself in the lot of the common people, earning the title of “King of the Peasants.” He re-ordered the State finances, both revenue and expenditure. Above all, he was responsible for the first codification of Polish law, and for the turning of what had been vassal principalities into provinces of a fairly centralised state. “One king, one law, one currency,” may be said to have been his motto, an echo of what had been done a century before by Louis IX in France. Finally, it was in his time that the first steps were taken toward the founding of the university of Cracow.

For three different things Casimir has been alternately praised and blamed. At the price of Silesia, which he handed over to the Bohemian (Czech) crown in 1335, he secured peace in the west, in order to devote himself to organising new and rich provinces acquired by legacy in the east; of which Lwow was soon to be the flourishing capital. Further he resigned the foreshore of the Baltic to the ambitious Knights of the Cross, again in order to get a settled frontier. Thirdly, he welcome Jewish exiles from other European lands to help develop the fast-growing towns, thus laying the foundations for a social problem that has not yet been solved.

The next decades saw further expansion. The young Queen Iadwiga became the bride of the able Lithuanian Prince, Ladislas Jagello, and the vast but wholly unorganised territories then included in Lithuania were thus united with Poland. What made this event easier was the threat of the neighbouring Teutonic Knights to both the countries concerned. They had got possession of the provinces on the Baltic, and were carrying the Gospel and the sword in all directions. A heavy blow was dealt them by the combined forces of the two countries at Tannenberg in 1410, but they continued to be a danger for more than a century. The union with Lithuania committed the Poles to interests in the great north-east, and is held by many to have weakened their grip on the mouth of the Vistula to the west. The newly opened-up lands became at once a field for settlement, into the promotion of which the upper classes threw themselves with zeal. They were backed at every stage by the missionary plans of a militant Roman Catholicism, and a slow but sure process of assimilation began. Thus were laid the foundations of the opposing claims of Poles and Russians to "the Borderlands", which continue even to-day. Polish armies were at one time to occupy Moscow, and in the rich plains of the Dnieper to the south, a social revolution was to come in the seventeenth century, which boded no good for the future.

Meantime grave issues were being decided at home. The influence of Hussite teachings from Prague had been

strongly felt, and the edict of Wielun in 1424 condemned them out of hand. Twenty years later a Polish king fell at Varna in Bulgaria, in the first of a long tale of struggles with Islam. But the really significant thing of these years was the rise of principles of democratic government in the state. An increasing number of the gentry came to take a part in the provincial assemblies, voting taxation and supervising the common life. An unfortunate feature of this was a manifest resistance to the royal ordinances. The same conflict was on in Poland as in contemporary England, and it was resolved in the opposite way. By the Statute of Nieszawa in 1454 the power of the assemblies was extended even to decisions about peace and war. When called, their delegates went to the national Diet (Sejm) with precise instructions, and tended rather to think in terms of their own province than of the whole nation. The deliberations of the Diet were thus made difficult. Together with the royal Council of magnates and bishops, known as the Senate, it formed the legislative machinery; and it could either co-operate with the king in his work or compass him about with obstructions.

Individual and regional interests were soon playing an inordinate part in these deliberations. The victory won by the sovereigns of France and England with the help of the towns and the yeomen over the unruly land magnates was never won in Poland. In 1505 the statute *Nihil Novi* re-affirmed the right of the nobles to control all matters affecting their persons and duties, and the defence of these privileges soon became an obsession. It was helped on by the revolt from all authority in things of the mind and spirit that marked the Renaissance and Reformation periods; and the ready acceptance of the reformed faith by many Polish families had grounds that were probably more political than religious. The seeds of dissent produced too often the wrong kind of fruit, and this was the case in Poland. When the line of the Jagellos died out in 1572, the fateful decision was taken that in future the kings should be elected by a national assembly; a practice which at best left the state for a time without a proper Head, and at the worst opened the way

for intrigues of all kinds, into which even foreign powers entered with zest. The crowning point of it all was the still more vicious principle of the free veto in the Diet, by which a single member could paralyse the whole course of public affairs. No finer example can be had in history of the way in which the best of principles, when carried to excess, can lead to the gravest of evils.

Yet the reigns of the last two Jagellos, Sigismund I and II, had been a half-century of greatness and glory for Poland. In 1525 the Dukes of Prussia, whose acceptance of Lutheran doctrines had put an end to the Teutonic Order, did homage as vassals on the town square in Cracow. The social and economic life of both town and country continued to progress, and the sons both of the gentry and of the wealthy burghers could be found studying in foreign universities from Wittenberg to Padua and Paris. Even earlier, the Father of Polish History, Jan Dlugosz, had written his memorable work, but in Latin. So too, the young Nicholas Kopernik (Copernicus) who had both Polish and German blood in his veins, had gone on from Cracow to Italy to pursue the studies that gave the world in 1543 his epoch-making book on *The Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies*, thus changing the whole course of astronomy.

By now the spirit of re-birth was everywhere in the saddle, and national languages were replacing Latin as the accepted medium of expression. A Polish literature—both prose and poetry, emerged in a generation, which could bear comparison with the best in Europe. Humanism won notable accessions in the lyrics of Kochanowski, and the prose essays of Rey and Orzechowski; and the political writings of the day, often done in Latin in order to reach a wider public, discussing the relations of church and state and the issues at stake between the individual and the group, revealed not only a fine grasp of what men were saying abroad, but also a native talent that Poles can look back on with pride to-day.

In 1530 the line of the Masovian Dukes died out, and what is now central Poland passed directly under the royal control. Add to this the growing importance of Lithuanian

connections, and one is not surprised that Warsaw was bound to rise from a provincial town to take the place of the remoter Cracow as the national capital. The cementing of closer union with the north-east by the Act of Lublin in 1569 sealed the matter. Three years later the first of many bridges was built across the Vistula at Warsaw, and in 1596 the court was moved from the Wawel Hill to the new and growing capital. With this event the second or middle period of Polish history was closed, and the third begun.

The Decline

Actually, as we noted above, it had begun a generation earlier. The campaign of the nobles to secure and extend their privileged position in the country had come to a head in 1565 in class legislation that has few parallels anywhere. A series of enactments in respect to trade and industry crippled the towns for good. The export of manufactured articles was forbidden, and the frontiers were opened to foreign goods in order to force down prices. At the same time the use of the Vistula as a channel for carrying produce to the sea was made exclusive for the landed nobility, and was entrusted to their agents—mostly foreigners. From now onward, for full two hundred years, the proud cities of Poland, which gave promise of great things in material and cultural well-being, lapsed into a shadow of what they had been. At best they remained but centres of local trade, at the worst they became heaps of abandoned and ruined buildings. Parallel legislation was aimed at the still privileged position of the peasants. They were reduced to serfdom, and from now on begin the prosecutions of serfs for illegal efforts to escape to the eastern borderlands that run into hundreds in the succeeding generations.

Other events of the years 1560–1570 were scarcely less fateful. An attempt of the king to regulate the abuses attached to the exploiting of royal domains by private gentlemen did not succeed. A few years later saw the coming of the Jesuit Fathers to Poland, who at once took in hand the task of clearing out, root and branch, all that

could be found of the Reformation. This movement had already revealed internal weaknesses, chiefly those of dissension between the various churches. Lutherans, Calvinists, Bohemian Brethren, only to mention the strongest groups, could not effect a united front; and the arrival of advocates of unitarianism (Socinus) created even worse discord. The decision of the wisest Pole of his time, the later Chancellor John Zamoyski, to hold to the mother church rather than embrace reform, in order to preserve the unity of the nation, was to settle the matter. Poland, like the rest of Europe, had been appalled by the spectacle of the religious wars in France, and wished to avoid them at all costs. But it may be conjectured that, could Zamoyski have foreseen what the next fifty years were to bring, he might have acted differently.

True, the able Hungarian prince, Stephen Batory, who became king of Poland in 1576, proved to be a sovereign worthy of the name. He was willing to work with the Jesuits, but he knew chalk from cheese. Public justice, law and order, and the admission by one and all that the whole was greater than the part, were enforced with courage and energy. In hard struggles with the unruly barons, Batory won through. More than that, in three campaigns with the rising power of Moscow, he shewed his skill as a military leader; making the Polish infantry into a first-class fighting force, and organising artillery as the sole prerogative of the crown. But he lived to reign only ten years, and there was no one competent to succeed him. For a century and more twilight settled over Polish public life. The aristocracy, linked with a church leadership that was bent at all costs on keeping things as they were, came to dominate the country. A stern censorship killed the freedom of the press, the Unitarians were driven out, and an *absolutum dominium* enthroned, but how different from the one envisaged by the great preacher Peter Skarga! People ceased to accept any responsibility for the public welfare, leaving it all to God. An easy optimism settled over the nation, and the proverb was accepted that "Even in misgovernment, Poland stands!" To those who had their

land and people to till it, the world looked the best possible: why take thought about ways of changing it?

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For the moment Poland seemed indeed fortunate. She escaped entirely the horrors of the Thirty Years' War. But the very next generation brought a deluge of woes. A revolt of the Cossacks in the Dnieper lands, led by the able Hetman Bohdan Chmielnicki, was directed against the land barons, but threatened the whole commonwealth, the more so as it brought in both Tartars and Turks as well. Defeat followed defeat, due in part to selfishness on the part of Polish leaders, and for a time things looked black indeed. Then came a Swedish invasion, which harried the country as far as Cracow itself. Casimir, the king, was forced to go into exile, and things were made worse by the defection of many Poznanian nobles, Protestants, to the Swedish cause. The royal initials were popularly said to mean *initium calamitatis regni*. A famous proclamation, promising liberation to the peasants, was never carried out. With the best of intentions, the king dedicated his kingdom to the Virgin, who was from that time worshipped as "Queen" of Poland, but wiser heads knew that Heaven can only help those who help themselves. A brave leader was at last found in Czarniecki, and the country was set free, but the damage done was fearful.

The capital was in ruins, as was many another proud city. The country-side was either laid waste or neglected, famine and disease were rampant. Since the Tartar invasions things had not looked so black. Yet the aristocracy went its own sweet way unmoved. In the midst of the trouble the Diet was "exploded" for the first time by a private member's veto, and national leadership seemed to be paralysed. To make matters worse, the Cossacks turned to Moscow for help, and set the consolidation of Russia a step further on the way. A valorous warrior in the person of John Sobieski came to the throne in 1676, chosen for his achievements against the Turks; and he became a European hero by his march to the relief of

Vienna in 1683. But one cannot make bricks without straw, or even clay, and Sobieski was to die of a broken heart in the nineties, despairing of getting his fellow gentry to realise the abyss before them.

He was succeeded by the first of two Saxon kings, who could hardly be blamed for being more interested in Dresden than in Warsaw. Never was the need for national unity and for courageous action greater; yet civil war was the sequel. At the time when Peter the Great was forging the weapons of a new Russia, and when the Duchy of Brandenburg had just been turned into the kingdom of Prussia, Poland was fast becoming a pilotless, even rudderless ship. Russians and Swedes were soon fighting on Polish soil, and the former were never really to be got rid of until the Partitions. There was no strong hand, no stable administration, no national budget, no army. Neither the dignity nor the authority of the state was maintained.

The first business of any ruler is to govern, for the alternative is gangsterdom. Into something like anarchy Poland slipped by swift degrees. The "Saxon times" have become proverbial as ones on which the supreme interest of those who should have saved the situation was "to eat, to drink, and to let out your belt." The ambition of the first August had been to make Dresden into a second Versailles. His son took more interest in Warsaw, and many fine mansions were built there—all of them, however, meant to minister to private rather than public demands. Outwardly the country seemed to recover, but no one wanted to work. Play, even of the coarser kind, was the passion of the day. The Diets met, but did nothing. Someone could always be found to "explode" them, and there were those at hand who wanted them "exploded." Of intellectual or social interests not a trace. The schools had been reduced to vanity by the Jesuits, whose purpose was to fit boys for the kingdom of heaven but never for citizenship. The universities were a dead letter. Such books as were published were mere compendiums either of piety or of clap-trap.

Even so, the rank and file of the upper classes seemed to

regard things just what they ought to be. Secure on their vast estates, busy with their mansion building—some of it on a scale far beyond their means, the heads of the great families snapped their fingers at public responsibilities. Private brawling was all too common, and cases of flagrant betrayal of the national interest were not unknown.

It remained for one man, a member of the Piarists—a rival Order to the Jesuits, to discover for himself the truth about the national disgrace, and to take up the fight for restitution. Sham and surrender had a sworn enemy in Father Stanislas Konarski. Educated in Rome and Paris, after he had completed the Polish schools, he caught the spirit of the modernists of the west. Both in regard to pedagogy and in public life the teachings of Locke and Montesquieu had impressed him. He knew something too of the work of Newton in science. In 1730 he returned home, and during ten years he studied the condition of things. Then he founded in Warsaw a College for Gentlemen's Sons, where with the help of kindred spirits he set about training the youth on modern lines. The long since out-of-date humanism of the Jesuit Fathers was discarded in favour of practical studies, modern languages and natural science being given a large place in the programme. Not only the mind, but also the body was given attention; and discussion of public questions was part of the weekly round. Konarski himself introduced the French drama into Poland and was charged in his old age with heresy for doing so. Thanks chiefly to his work, though even the Jesuits came into line when they saw that the old order was gone, the youth were trained who were to make the dark days of the Partitions which followed, a time of national regeneration.

But the Piarist Father did not stop there. Convinced that even the best men must fail where institutions are all wrong, he prepared a frontal attack on the cherished idol of the nobles—the *liberum veto*. In the early sixties he published, in succession, the four little volumes of *Effective Public Counsels*, which exposed fearlessly all the dire evils the unanimity principle had brought upon the state, and proposed simple but sure ways for removing the blight. A

fierce controversy was let loose, but the reformer won his battle. From now on there were no more "explosions" of the Diet, and a marked change was noticeable in the behaviour of many eminent men.

The commonwealth could not be saved, however; things had gone too far. Had "the last king of Poland", Stanislas Poniatowski been a man with backbone as well as enlightenment, rescue might still have been possible. The plans of Frederic of Prussia and the Empress Catherine might still have been frustrated by a united and resolute nation; but such a thing did not exist. Evils that had been maturing for a century could not be cured at once, the more so as the older generation was slow to move. In 1772 slices of the kingdom were lopped off by the three neighbour empires, but even then not everyone would see the danger. A deep rift divided the aristocracy into two camps, one of them looking to Russia for deliverance, the other hating the sight and mention of everything from the east. Writing to a Polish friend Jean Jacques Rousseau used memorable words: "They may swallow you, don't let them digest you!" This was to become the main purpose of those who still loved their country, and their number was now much larger—thanks to Konarski.

Help came from an unexpected quarter. In 1773 the Jesuit Order was dissolved by the Pope, and its vast properties in Poland were turned over to the state. At once a move was made to create a Public Board of Education—the first of its kind in Europe; which set about using funds and building for the creation of a national school system. Some of the best heads in the country—even one-time Jesuit Fathers, joined in the task, and the next twenty years saw some quite remarkable results. The university of Cracow was modernised from top to bottom, by the hand of Poland's first physiocrat, Father Hugo Kollataj. Even constant interference by the agents of the Russian court was not allowed to stop the work. At the same time the nation was not idle in other things. The Diet that met in 1788 remained in session for four years, and its finest achievement was the famous Constitution of 3rd May, 1791,

to which the nation can point with pride even to-day. The winter of 1789-90 was memorable for another reason. There met in Warsaw the first Congress of Polish Cities, the result of whose deliberations was the initiation of a new era in urban life. Nor was the field of the arts and letters left neglected. These years saw the creation, by the unbending energy and the genius of Wojciech Boguslawski, of the Polish national theatre. Not only did the influence of the Enlightenment in France and Germany make itself felt on the Vistula, but the spirit of the national and social revolution of the west as well.

In this respect one thing is notable. While in France the clarion call was for more liberties, the leaders in the regeneration of Poland took the opposite view. Not more liberty, but more discipline was the need of the day ! This was emphasised again and again by Konarski and by those who succeeded to his task. For this reason the Constitution of 3rd May seems rather to err on the side of conservatism ; at least by contrast with what had been going on in America and in France. Not that it could help very much, for the three imperial dynasties were not in the mood to trifle with any "jacobinism" in eastern Europe. In 1792 came the second Partition, in which Austria did not take part ; and three years later came the end. All that had been Poland was now dissected, or trisected, and incorporated into the neighbouring empires. For a century at least, the Poles were not to be allowed to "be themselves". Indeed every effort was to be made to wipe out the nation altogether.

CHAPTER III

THE ORDEAL OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

THE Congress of Vienna in 1815 carried out the Fourth Partition of Poland. Europe east of the Rhine was handed over to the Crowned Heads to rule as they would, and the principle of Legitimacy—another name for Divine Right—was sanctified as a dogma. The Holy Alliance was formed to defend it. When the German Empire was created half a century later, two-thirds of the continent came to be ruled by three, or counting the Turkish world, four imperial dynasties; while the fate of the smaller nations, from the Finns in the far north to the Adriatic and the Aegean in the south, was left in their hands. State and Church were felt to be in league with one another to keep the common man in his place. Every effort to inform the outside world of the true condition of things was frowned upon, and the outside world told that "order had been restored in Europe".

Not many people belonging to those nations were ready to believe that this state of affairs was to last for a century. Even the emperors themselves lived in constant fear that the volcano on which they were sitting might erupt at any moment. To the most irreconcilable belonged the Poles, and they were soon to win for themselves in the chancelleries of the continent the name of "troublers of Israel". For one thing, they had been a subject people for a much shorter time than the Czechs or the Serbs. For another, they had done so much to set their own house in order during the years that marked the turn of the century, that they had a just grievance at what happened in 1815. For

still another, their hopes of liberation had risen high under the fine promises of Napoleon, and their troops had given a good account of themselves on many battlefields during nearly twenty years. Clearly the nation was not degenerate, and the decision of the Powers to continue the Partitions was rightly felt to be no solution of any problem whatsoever.

Four-fifths of their one-time kingdom was now subject to the Tsar, the rest to the Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia. From neither Hapsburg nor Hohenzollern had they anything to expect. Their one hope lay in the fine idealism of Alexander I. He was known to have liberal ideas, and he had made the enlightened Polish magnate, Adam Czartoryski, his adviser. The terms of the Treaty, if carried out, would secure to the Poles at least their national integrity; and by becoming their King, he seemed to be giving them a guarantee of personal protection. They at once set to work to restore order in the country, in particular to make Warsaw into a more fitting place as the capital of the Congress Kingdom. With Wilno it now became, for fifteen precious years, a hive of busy workers, both material and cultural ends being served with enthusiasm. In the capital the Scientific Society, in Wilno the university became institutions of prime importance. The despair that had followed the failure of the Rising of Kosciuszko in 1794 was forgotten. Saxon immigrant weavers settled in the well-watered forest lands south-west of Warsaw, and founded the textile industry that was in time to become the great city of Lodzh—the Manchester of Poland. A National Bank was founded by the genius of Lubecki, and the long-ruined finances of the country put on their feet. Even the army was backed by public support, and soon became a marked contrast to the sorry fighting force of half a century before.

All these hopes, however, were to be short-lived. For two reasons the promise of a bright future was doomed to wither. The Tsar was soon to come under the malign

influence of Metternich, who had good cause for complaint that the Russian Prince was not playing the game. There were also many of his own court, who did not share in the least the Tsar's ideas and ideals. Secondly, the Poles soon saw that as a price for the liberties they enjoyed in the Vistula provinces, the far larger Borderlands east of the Bug and the Niemen, which were equally dear to them, must be given up for lost. To this they could not, or would not reconcile themselves. For them it meant that the work of four hundred years was to be undone. The result of this was mistrust and even open opposition, notably among the younger generation. The fires of these feelings were now to be fed by the Romantic Movement in literature, which was sweeping Europe.

What was in England little more than a revolt of letters, became in Germany, in Poland, and even in Russia itself, a national and social awakening of the first order. Its focus-point in Poland was the university of Wilno, already mentioned. Enjoying a large measure of freedom, and possessing at the moment an unusually gifted and courageous group of professors, the student body gave itself to the seeing of visions, and the dreaming of dreams. Secret societies flourished, one of the chief influences being the work of the *Tugendbunde*—the Unions for Manliness, in the nearby German universities. Led by a few older students, one of whom was soon to become famous as the greatest poet of his people (Adam Mickiewicz), they nurtured ideas and plans which were certainly not acceptable to the powers that be. In 1824, as the result of betrayals, the flower of the youth were arrested, and many of them banished to Siberia for forbidden practices. Under Novosiltsov a stern period of repressions followed, and the whole nation trembled at what might happen.

Then came the death of Alexander, and the accession of Nicholas. How different the son was from his father, all the world was soon to learn. The Decabrist Rising in Russia was sternly put down, but the fires smouldered in secret. The example of Greece and the figure of Byron were in the minds of all. All that was needed was a shock

from without, and this was given by the revolution in France in 1830. Belgium followed suit, Mazzini raised the standard of the Young Italy, and the Poles responded in November. One of the reasons was their resolve to prevent the Russians from sending an army to the west to overawe the Belgians, and in this they succeeded. For a year they waged a brave, though ill-managed struggle against serious odds. Partly owing to their own inability to agree on the ends in view—some of them wanted social as well as political revolution, they failed miserably, and the leaders of the nation were forced into exile.

The beaten insurrectionists knew very well that the Austrian and Prussian authorities had done all they could to stand by and assist the Tsar's troops in putting down the rising, but their hearts must have been warmed by the enthusiasm and sympathy of the masses who welcomed them in the German cities as they made their way in groups toward Paris. It was the time of the famous *Polenlieder*—the songs and hymns of the German poets in honour of the Polish champions of human liberties, and before the arrival of the anti-Polish sentiment of a later time. Clearly they had not fought in vain, or had they? After all, no revolt is justified unless it succeeds, or such at any rate seems to be the verdict of history. In the liberal France of Louis Phillipe they settled down, counting on a speedy reversal of their fortunes, and a return to their homeland. It never came.

To the French authorities their presence was anything but a satisfaction; and before long those of the Left were to feel the hand of the police. The eminent historian, Joachim Lelewel, who had been a shining light of the university of Wilno, had soon to leave the country and settle in Brussels. Those of the Right, at whose head was the now veteran Czartoryski, had money, and they bought the Hotel Lambert, where they set up the fiction of a Polish Court and a Foreign Office. For a generation this place remained the guiding star of the nation's efforts to keep her cause before the attention of European governments. Right through the fateful days of 1848 and the promising

time of the Crimean War the slowly diminishing band of patriots held to their course; keeping at the same time their agents in Poland itself, so as to co-ordinate any efforts made there for the cause of liberation. One wonders at the faith and tenacity of these men, whom not even the collapse of all the hopes of 1848 was able quite to daunt.

While this was going on, other emigrés were enriching Polish literature with some of the masterpieces of lyric, epic and dramatic poetry of modern times. Carrying the Romantic idea to the point of a mystical faith in the nation, they added to it a no less mystical belief in the equality of all nations, and in the right of each, however small, to play its part in the Divine Economy. Seeing the sufferings of their people, it was not hard for them to formulate the view that, just as Christ was crucified in the cause of human regeneration, so a nation might also be done to death. But just as He rose again, so would the nation. Thus we have the sentiments elaborated that had been put into simple words by Brodzinski just before the Insurrection:

Hail, O Christ, Thou Lord of men !
Poland, in Thy footsteps treading,
Like Thee suffers, at Thy bidding;
Like Thee, too, shall rise again.

Much of this Messianism was fantastic, but it had its roots in the same kind of thing as the faith of the Covenanters, and no one was ever more of a Messianist than Oliver Cromwell. On all this Miss Gardner's book is our best guide in English.

At home on the Vistula things were not happy. The spirit of Metternich found its opposite number in the Russian Minister of Education, Count Uvarov, and the man who had put down the insurrection, General Pashkevich, was in charge in Warsaw. Here, at the cost of the Poles, the hated Citadel was built, not to defend but to overawe the town. Confiscations of property were general, the universities and schools were closed. In the Border-

lands relentless assimilation methods were introduced, their influence was felt even on the Vistula. None of the sublime writings of Mickiewicz, or Krasinski, or Slowacki—all of them in exile, nor the matchless music of Chopin, nor diplomatic interventions, nor the toil of patriots at home could change the facts. The national cause was weakened by the fact that too many of the aristocracy were still indifferent as to the lot of the masses—e.g. the serfs on their estates. There were few cities, and almost no middle class. Those who cared, had now the humiliation of looking on while foreign governments freed their serfs. In Prussia this had already been done, at least in theory, after Jena. In Austria liberation came in 1848, in Russia in 1861–2. Small wonder if the masses had mostly stood by with indifference during the insurrection, and left the gentry to fight alone! More would have to be done to create a nation on the broadest lines—not on those of the gentry and higher nobles, before Poland could face a real trial of her strength with others.

For the ardent patriots, who clamoured for action, another cause for concern was at hand. A strong conviction was growing, quite in keeping with the spirit of the nineteenth century, that all romantic nonsense was to be deprecated, that revolutions were a footless business, and could not really lead to the desired goal. Sober observers saw clearly that the odds were against them. They saw too that, whether considered as a nation or as a state, Poland had too little dynamic of her own, too scant material resources, too thin a veneer of culture over a great mass of untaught commoners. Already in the thirties the beginnings were made in the Prussian provinces of what in time was to be called “organic work”, a programme of social and economic improvement which would benefit every member of society, and fit him both in body and in mind to be a worthy citizen and soldier. Very soon this campaign for cultural and economic self-help made its way also into the Congress Kingdom, and the men and women who took it up came to be known as the Realists.

“Cultivate your garden!” could be said to be their

slogan. Work rather than war was its content. Such a view tacitly accepted the political situation, came in fact to eschew politics altogether. Agitation was held to be a waste of time and nerves, and the building up of the social heritage put in the forefront of living. Needless to say, those who clung to the romantic view (one might say "those who felt" as over against those who reasoned) condemned this position out of hand; to them it looked like a betrayal, at best it was compromise and they hated it. Thus was a deep rift opened up in Polish society, which lasted until the war, and has not wholly been healed even yet.

There were various grades of the "compromise" policy: from the really constructive work of the eminent patriot Andrew Zamoyski, founder of the Agricultural Society in Warsaw in 1858, which served as an unofficial "Diet", to the far more downright views of his rival Alexander Wielopolski, who was willing even to accept office under the Tsar in order to address himself to the vital task of education. The fact was, of course, that both the Realists and their opponents were right, the one because nothing in the long run can save a nation except the work of its own head and heart and hands, the other because—as the sequel showed, there was grave danger of compromise leading to passive acceptance of the *status quo*, and that would have been the end of the Polish nation.

Meantime the international situation had undergone a radical change. In 1852 Louis Napoleon, who as a young man had wanted to join the Polish insurrection, made himself Emperor of France. After the failure of the Crimean War, he began to espouse the cause of nationalism—at first in Italy, and that was a good omen. If he could be held to this view, and interested in Poland's hopes, something might yet be done. But some direct action was necessary, to remind Europe of the facts. Even bloodshed might help. It came in the form of demonstrations and riots in Warsaw in the early weeks of 1861, at the very moment when Wielopolski was hard at work to get more and better schools and Zamoyski was disciplining the

nobility in his Agricultural Society. They were, of course, the work of the extremists of the Left, and were regretted by all the realists, but they could not be undone. Men were shot down, and again Europe heard of the Tsarist "terror".

Alexander II, on coming to the throne, had modified the absolutism of his predecessor, though he warned the Poles when he visited Warsaw in 1856 "*pas des reveries !*" Even after the riots the case was not hopeless, until the news came that the youth were to be conscripted for the Russian army. This was too much, and the fires of bloody revolt broke out in January 1863, although there had been no preparation, and everyone must have felt that the prospect was hopeless. The upshot was even more tragic than a generation earlier, and seemed to confirm the line taken by the Realists. The penalties now inflicted on all who took part, and even on many innocent people, were extreme. Notably in the Borderlands, where a systematic campaign was now begun to confiscate properties, and root out the troublesome Polish element.

One good thing came of it all, but it was no consolation to the sufferers. The younger generation, deprived of their lands, turned to the professions and to industry. Now at last a big step was taken to strengthen the still far from robust middle class. Polish industry, which had been slowly growing for half a century, now began to make itself into a power. From 1870 onwards it profited from the opening of the Russian markets, and unheard-of strides forward resulted. Advocates of this appeared in the school of Positivists, which found a brilliant voice in the writings of Alexander Swietochowski and his colleagues; some of whom seemed to forget they were Poles altogether, and to resign themselves to ideals of material well-being and nothing more. In any case the spirit of mystical Romanticism was all but gone, the rising generation had something else to do than shed its blood for any, even the national, cause. Support for this view of life was found in the Darwinian theories of the survival of the fittest. Justification for it was even sought in the sudden changes

in the international sphere. The victories of Bismarckian policy between 1863 and 1871 seemed to be sufficient proof of the contention that only might was right, and that faith of any kind had little to do when the hard facts of life were to be faced.

To face these was a terrible business for Poles after Sedan. France had been humbled, Bismarck was master of Europe. His attitude to the Polish nation was well known. No love had ever been lost between the partitioning Powers. One was Lutheran, one Orthodox, and one Catholic, and it was only the threat of Napoleon that had drawn them together. After 1815, however, they had at least this in common, that Poland must be kept under; and prevented, so far as possible, from getting the ear of other governments. This plan succeeded in 1856 and the man was now on the scene who was to make its pursuance the keystone of his policy for a generation. Otto von Bismarck had grown up on the borders of Poland, and while in diplomatic service in St. Petersburg he studied the Polish question from every angle. His position was clear, and from the Prussian point of view logical. No concessions to Polish patriotism anywhere, since that would mean concessions everywhere! One of his first steps as head of the government in 1862 had been to assure the Tsar of support in putting down any Polish insurrection. To Bismarck the province of Poznań, and the lands between it and the Baltic were a condition of Prussia's existence. Hence the need for keeping an understanding with Russia as the first commandment of the German Decalogue; and the need, if necessary, for coercing Austria to play the same stern game.

This latter was not so easy. The emperor Franz Josef was humiliated by the defeat of 1866, and saw that the only way to strengthen his monarchy was to strengthen its constituent parts. The Poles of Galicia had been subject to varying degrees of Germanisation—on the lines of Josefism, a mixture of imperial and religious centralisation, as well as to discriminating measures in the field of economic

life. To make things worse, the Polish aristocracy had failed to learn the lesson of recognition of and co-operation with the peasants in the way their fellows in Poznań had learned it—and with sorry results. What with their poor soil and far from happy social organisation, the southern provinces of Poland did nothing but mark time during the first half of the century. Indeed, in 1846, they had been the scene of brutal riots, which sowed discord and dismay among all sincere patriots. Now came a new deal: the granting of autonomy, of which advantage was taken at once. Cracow and Lwów soon became the centres of cultural life. Warsaw and Wilno had been fifty years earlier, and even the reactionary land barons had to come into line and support such things as elementary education for their villagers. Efforts were made to reach a *modus vivendi* with the Ruthenian (Ukrainian) people east of the San, and the whole outlook on life was set for change. In return for these privileges the Poles showed their good-will in the Imperial parliament in Vienna, and came to look on Austria as their one window on the outside world.

The granting of these favours was no doubt a political necessity for the Habsburg realm, but it did not suit Bismarck. He saw the two Polish universities just mentioned not only enjoying liberties denied elsewhere, but becoming the gathering-places for the rising generation—already beginning to doubt the efficacy of the realist programme for saving their country. It was essential for him that the Poles should get more or less similar treatment in all three empires, and now things were going awry. As time went on the differences became clearer. In pre-war decades the Poles in Prussia found themselves with their backs to the wall; in open conflict not only with the administration—which was making strenuous efforts to “root them out”, but also with the German people. In pre-war Russia they were—though not unanimously, in open conflict with the Tsarist system, but had no quarrel with the Russian people. Indeed they had much in common with those of that nation who were also fighting for freedom. In Austria, on the other hand, they were on the best of

terms with the regime, were in fact accused of being one of its pillars, and were also on good footing with the south (Catholic) German people. These facts were clearly seen by the men and women who came to bear the responsibility of social and national leadership in the eighties and nineties, and they acted accordingly. This leadership developed on two, mutually opposed, lines, and prepared the nation for the events of 1914-1918. We must now see precisely what they were after.

It was inevitable that the growth of industrial towns in the Russian part of Poland would bring with it the movement known as Marxian Socialism. Curiously enough, it came from the Russian university circles where Poles were present, and was at once made by patriots into both an instrument for keeping alive national self-consciousness and one for class-interests. The story of how those who stressed the former more, broke away in the nineties cannot be told here. Neither can the no less absorbing one of the part Poles played in the revolution of 1905. Suffice to say that out of this movement came the men and women, with Joseph Pilsudski at their head, who were to take up arms in the national cause in 1914, and then to play the largest part in establishing the new Poland as we know it to-day. What strikes one throughout is the prevalence of a mystical element in the hearts of all, rather than any thought for material profit. Starting as an international crusade, the movement soon became a national one, and ceased at that point to be either anti-aristocrat or anti-religious. But it remained to the end anti-Tsarist and so anti-Russian: the legacy in the hearts of its leaders of the cruel reprisals after 1863. And, in the immediate pre-war years, though possessing the slenderest of resources, this group prepared on Austrian territory the nucleus of armed forces, ready at any moment to try again the fortune of war as a way of freeing their country.

Simultaneously a quite different line of action was being proclaimed by political rivals, whose plan it was to main-

tain the best of relations with Tsarist Russia, carrying the principle of "compromise", and collaboration to the limit. Not only was a press campaign matured on these lines, but something like a philosophy of life also: again with a view to preparing the Polish people for the struggle that was expected. These men looked on the Socialists as crazy dreamers, at the best as utopians, and they restricted their own hopes to a reuniting of as much of Polish soil as possible under the sceptre of the Tsar. They proposed to leave to the future to decide what the status of those lands should be. In any case they counted on the break-up of Austria-Hungary; and they warned the Socialist leaders, who were depending on the help of Vienna against Russia, that Austria herself would have to take her orders—even in regard to Poland, from Berlin.

This group of workers, who were to be known by the turn of the century as National Democrats (Endeks), were in a curious position. They inherited the views of Wielopolski, and regarded Germans in general as the sworn enemy of Poland. They sought collaboration with Russia, but they made their Headquarters under the Austrian flag in Lwow. Their real hope lay in the coming-together of Russia and France after 1891, in which they saw—and rightly, the prospects of a breach between St. Petersburg and Berlin. What made many of their fellow-Poles mistrust them was a patent returning to the thing that had proved so disastrous in the nineteenth century, viz. dependence on others, reliance on international diplomacy, rather than on your own powers. Nevertheless, with Bismarck gone, events were justifying their view. Ten years later came the *entente cordiale* in the west, which meant that Germany was "encircled". Common sense seemed to tell these "realists" where their only sure hopes of liberation lay.

The ruthless policy adopted by Prussia toward her Polish subject from 1872 onwards made this policy even more obvious. There were first the anti-Polish decrees that belonged to the *Kulturkampf* (the struggle with the Roman Church); and then the grandiose scheme for the buying-

out of Polish landowners and the settling of German farmers in their place, for which fantastic sums of money were voted by parliament. Both the project itself and the thoroughness with which it was planned made this threat a very serious one indeed, since the loss of the land would make the Poles Ishmaelites in the earth. Only a type of organisation for corporate self-help which could serve as a model anywhere in the world saved the Poles of Prussia from disruption, and frustrated official hopes completely. This struggle gave peculiar significance to a notable book published in 1908 in Polish and in French, by Roman Dmowski, by now the recognised leader of the National Democrats. It was called "Russia, Germany and the Polish Question", and it had a double purpose. The nation was to be warned, and the outside world was to be informed of the facts. The hour seemed to be near when, on the ruins of the three-power pact which Bismarck had toiled to maintain, the Poles might hope to see rise again the structure of national freedom.

The Russo-Japanese war had been fought, and the revolution of 1905 had forced on reluctant rulers the granting of the Douma. In all three the Poles had seats, but each time fewer. Of course, only of the one party, for the patriots of the Left would have nothing to do with Russian institutions. They recalled the secret Memorial of Prince Imeretynski in 1898, who had been friendly as General-Governor, but advocated the incorporation of the Congress Kingdom into the Russian empire ! These men, from their point of view, looked on in dismay while Dmowski threw himself into the Neo-Slavist movement in 1908, though it meant associating with the bitterest enemies of Polish national aspirations. They condemned the whole National Democratic campaign in Lwow, directed towards wrecking all hopes for good-will relations with the Ukrainians. And they felt that their doubts were more than justified when, in 1912, the Imperial government decided to separate the Polish province of Chelm, between the Vistula and the Bug, from the Congress Kingdom, and make it a part of the province of Kiev.

Thus divided in orientation, and in their convictions, both as to the ends in view and the ways of attaining them, did the Poles await the "war of the peoples", for which in 1842 Mickiewicz had bade them to pray ! Not so much unprepared as ill-prepared, both because of the tragic situation in which their country lay, and because of their own short-comings. Yet the case was far from hopeless. Partitioned for a century, the nation had remained alive. Neither its speech, nor its faith had been surrendered ; nor yet the belief that somehow, some day, it would again be free.

What is more, it had not suffered in vain. The ordeal had taught notable lessons, and had been marked by quite as notable triumphs. In their struggle with Prussia, the Poles had given as good as they got, and came out the victors rather than the losers. In the central provinces, under Russian rule, they had gone far toward realising the goal said to have been set them after Sedan by the Frenchman Thiers, *enrichissez vous !* Along with this went the growth of the element Poland had always lacked, a sturdy and enlightened middle class, which has since become the back-bone of the nation. Finally, under the more liberal control of the Habsburgs, letters and science developed in Cracow and in Lwow ; Polish painters came to take their place among the ablest in Europe, and something like normal intercourse with the outside world was possible in all the fields that make up modern culture. In celebrating the 500th anniversary of the founding of Cracow university in 1900, representatives from many lands took part. Even the Boy Scouts had begun to flourish in Galicia before 1914.

On the map of Europe there was no Poland, at the Olympic Games Poles could not compete. But there was a Paderewski, there was a Modjeska, there was the philosopher Lutoslawski, there was the eminent woman scientist, Marie Sklodowska, who lost her identity by marrying Pierre Curie ! There was also the novelist Henryk Sienkiewicz, whose stories were read in every continent, and whose lot it was to be the first Pole honoured by the Nobel Prize for literature. This sort of thing no police-state, no dynasty,

no imperialism could wish out of existence. Along with their neighbours, the Finns, the Czechs and the South Slavs, all of whom the world was soon to set free, they could recall the song of their Legions who had marched in Lombardy under Napoleon against the age-old empires:

Poland has not perished wholly
While we live to own her !

On the staircase of the Wilno Museum hangs a notable picture by the recently deceased master, Ferdinand Ruszczyc. A mighty vessel is seen riding troubled seas, while a storm rages overhead. But the ship holds stoutly on, and the legend underneath is a brave one: *Nec mergitur !* The allegory is obvious.

CHAPTER IV

THE RESTORATION 1914-1918

It is idle to speculate what would have been the fate of the subject peoples of Central Europe had the Great War not broken out. There is much to be said for the view that German imperialism would have got its way, had it only been patient and not tried a short-cut. On the other hand, as Max Weber pointed out in 1924 the time was passed when regional or national groups could be consolidated—by assimilation into a single nation—as the French had achieved this process. The common school and the modern press had seen to that,

One might go even a step farther. Thanks to different agencies, such as Socialism in urban areas and the Church everywhere, the children of many parents who had not known any truly national loyalties, came to see that they were Lithuanians, Slovaks, or Poles. In a word, while the looser imperialism of Austrian type had some justification, that of Russia and Germany was doomed to failure. Much suffering was involved, however, and it may be doubted whether the Powers that held Poland in their grip could have been forced to set her free by any other means than war.

Space does not permit of an account of the Great War on the Eastern Front. Suffice to note that for Poland it meant a double tragedy. Her sons were conscripted to fight in three armies, not infrequently against one another. Further, the major operations during 1914-1916 were fought out on Polish territory. The Central Powers counted on a general rising in the Congress Kingdom against the Tsar, but Dmowski and his helpers had done their work too well. The loyalty of the populace helped greatly the mobilisation

of the Russian armies, and made the task of their enemies far harder. Though defeated in East Prussia, the Russians won notable victories south of the Marshlands, and inside of two months they were in the Carpathians. They even threatened Cracow, but were thrown back by a mighty effort in November. During the long winter they occupied the line of the Dunajec river and the Carpathian ridge; but they were driven out in May, 1915, by the Mackensen offensive, and by the end of August there were no more Russian troops on Polish soil. Warsaw was taken by the Germans on August 6, and the autumn saw Poland "occupied" by the two Central Powers, the Germans holding the west and north, the Austrians the south-east.

Fifteen months of constant war, and three years of foreign occupation—that is the history of 1914–1918. The miseries of both were endless. In their great retreat the Russians had taken great numbers of Poles with them—including three hundred young men and women from Warsaw as hostages; and had laid waste large parts of the eastern provinces. The liquid resources of the cities were also taken, leaving them without funds to face the coming winter. Perhaps it was just as well, for the Germans proceeded to requisition, both in town and country, everything movable that could be of the least use for prosecuting the war in France. From Lodzh alone they took not only great stores of textile goods and raw materials, but every bit of machinery, copper wiring, or other fixtures. In time they even took the church bells. As the world soon saw, they counted on the farms of Poland to feed their own population, and thus frustrate the blockade. The vast forests were soon put under the axe, and before a year was out the Germans were working on a plan to raise half a million Polish recruits to take the place of the fearful losses around Verdun.

The story of how the Poles met all these intentions has not yet been properly told. When it is, people will realise more than they do now the contribution they made to the Allied victory. Had things gone otherwise, the fate of France might have been decided before American help was

available. To understand the main features of the struggle, we must go back a bit to pre-war days.

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The Polish Socialists had begun after 1905 to lay the foundations of a military force. A fund for financing this has been established twenty years earlier, and contributions—though modest, kept coming in, especially from the New World. Two groups of riflemen were ready in 1914, one in Cracow the other around Lwow. The former was under the personal direction of Josphe Pilsudski. Permitted, and even encouraged by the Austrian authorities, because their purpose was to fight Russia, these units had most of their leaders from among exiles from the Congress Kingdom, and when they crossed the frontier on August 6, 1914 they hoped for a rising that would make Russian military operations impossible west of the Vistula. In this they were disappointed, as we have seen. What is more, the events of the year seemed to justify the National Democrat policy—the Russians seemed to be winning. Then came the reverses of the summer of 1915, by the end of which the task set themselves by the "Legions" was achieved. Poland was freed from Tsarist control. What critics of the Legions had compared to the tale of Don Quixote, tilting even at wind-mills, had become not a wild fancy but a reality.

The whole situation was now changed. A provisional German administration was now established in Warsaw, the parallel Austro-Hungarian one in Lublin. A few Poles, who allowed their anti-Russian convictions to blind their eyes to facts, welcomed what had happened; but the rest—with Pilsudski at their head, saw that the nation was no better off, perhaps even worse. There was little chance that Berlin would consent to the uniting of Congress Poland with Galicia as a Habsburg "land" under an Austrian archduke as king—the fond hope cherished by the National Committee that had been set up in Cracow. The liberation of Poland was thus no nearer, and the real enemy was now the German Empire.

The Commander made this quite clear to his friends in Warsaw, during a secret visit made in September, 1915; and he surprised them all by arguing that the task of the Legions was done. More than that he opposed any further recruiting for their ranks, fearing that such troops as might be mustered would now be used for purposes foreign to their original plans. This must be hindered at all costs. The Legions had fought "with" the Central Empires, but never *for* them. No Pole wanted to help the Germans to victory in France, or the Austrians in their battles in the Alps against Italy. The almost mad hope began to be harboured, that just as the might of the Tsar had been broken in the east, so the power of the Central Empires might be broken in the west. Thus would tumble in ruin all three Powers that had kept Poland in subjection, and the way to liberation and union be open.

Now, if ever, the grave question had to be faced: what could be done to balk the German plan, and contribute, even if only by passive resistance, to the victory of the democratic Powers?

The conquering Germans had proclaimed themselves as liberators, and protested their goodwill toward those liberated. Why not take every advantage of this, and do everything possible to preserve the national heritage; or at least to prevent craven submission? An affirmative answer was given by many; and they were at once given the name of "Activists" by the pro-Russian party, who as a matter of course, refused all overtures of collaboration out of hand. Arguing that the Russian armies might come back, they did not want to place themselves in a false position; in any case they refused all advances by the German Military governor, Eric von Beseler, and viewed with mistrust all plans for a Polish civilian administration under German oversight.

Their opponents went on their way, none the less, and only drew the line at a vital point. They declined to sanction the forming of a Polish army, except under the surest guarantees that it would be controlled exclusively by a Polish government. In particular, Pilsudski would not

let the Legions be used as the nucleus of this army; but was quietly at work, with a group of able helpers, on the training of civilians against the time when they could serve the national cause alone.

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There was one great decision which the Poles had waited for in vain from the very start. Neither side in the war, no single Power, had dared to raise the issue of Polish independence. As a matter of fact, few people in Europe realised in 1914 that the question of the future of Poland was involved at all. There had indeed been proclamations, notably that of the Grand Duke Nicholas, but all couched in terms that were very uncertain. Not a word came from the Allies in the west, the reason for which was that they accepted the Russian thesis that the Polish problem was an internal problem of the Tsar's empire. And if they declined to make a commitment while the Russian armies were advancing, they were less than ever desirous of intervening in time of defeat. To do so might mean running the risk of losing their gallant Ally, who could easily have made a separate peace on quite good terms. Thus was the position of the Poles caught on the horns of a dilemma; and the one hope that remained was that the struggle would last long enough for the real issue to ripen, and the proper solution to become evident to all. Conscious of this, Pilsudski resigned his leadership of the Legions, and retired to Cracow to await events.

They were not long in coming. In November, 1916, the Central Powers issued their famous Declaration of an independent Poland, thus forcing onto the arena of international affairs a matter they had striven for a century to keep out of sight. Unfortunately, General Beseler wrecked all prospects of winning the nation for the plan by announcing the next day the creation of a Polish army under German commanders. The cat was out of the bag, nor could the breach be mended by a third statement, promising a Provisional Polish Council of State, whose business it would be to prepare the way for elections, and the calling

of a national Diet. |Everyone" knew that" such elections could not be permitted in wartime, and no one for a moment believed that Polish interests were really being considered. Of course the Allies protested openly against the whole scheme, but their pronouncements counted for little as long as they themselves were not ready to offer definite counter-proposals. Only one thing was clear. The Poles were resolved not to be led up the garden path, which would certainly mean that their sons would be taken to fight on the Somme.

The Provisional Council met in January, 1917, with Pilsudski as Head of the Military Section; and months of a game of hide-and-seek followed. Formal collaboration was not allowed for a moment to abate the policy of passive resistance on all vital issues. The Council kept asking for control of the Legions, but when the young Austrian Emperor Karl released them, it was to the German Governor General, not to the Council! At once the vexed question arose as to the oath of allegiance they should now take, and here Pilsudski was adamant. No oath should be taken save to the Polish state, and to its duly accepted rulers. This position was strengthened by the Russian revolution of March, 1917, and the fact that one of the first acts of the republican government was the recognition of Polish independence. Opposition had already been stiffened by Wilson's declaration of January 22, in which he used the notable words:

"statesmen are everywhere agreed that there should be a united, independent and autonomous Poland."

Failing to get the Provisional Council to dissolve itself, Pilsudski withdrew from it on July 2nd, taking three others with him. The recruiting efforts of the Germans had brought in only 1,500 men. Their resolve now to force an oath of allegiance to the German High Command on the Legions ended in a fiasco. Only one out of seven took the oath, and the troops were either interned or sent back to their places in the Austrian army. On July 21st,

the Commander was arrested, and he spent the next fifteen months as a military prisoner in the fortress of Magdeburg. The Council resigned, and was replaced in October by a Regency of three men, Prince Zdislas Lubomirski, Cardinal Kakowski, and Joseph Ostrowski. The game of hide-and-seek went on as before.

We must now turn to what was being done outside Poland to help the cause. Early in 1915 a Relief Committee for Polish War victims had been founded in Switzerland by the novelist Sienkiewicz with the help of the most distinguished living Pole, Ignace Paderewski. In Europe they found plenty of backing, but they counted still more on the support of the 3,000,000 emigrants living in the U.S.A. In order to organise this support, Paderewski went to America in the spring, visiting London on his way. For obvious reasons this enterprise was kept clear of all political affiliations, but the eminent pianist made it quite clear in his speeches that the sympathies of all concerned were with the Allies. In order to further this work, Dmowski left St. Petersburg in the autumn, whither he had gone on the taking of Warsaw by the Germans, and began to push the cause of Poland in London, Paris and Rome. His mission had the blessing of the Russian Foreign Ministry, his terms of reference going only as far as the autonomy promised by the Grand Duke more than a year before.

He was welcomed in England, given an Honorary Degree by the university of Cambridge, and accorded official interviews by prominent statesmen. Other Poles, notably August Zaleski—later to become Polish Foreign Minister, were also at work in London; whose sympathies were, however, rather with Pilsudski's point of view and who distrusted Dmowski. With J. H. Harley as editor, they started in 1917 the Polish Review, which was later succeeded by The New Poland. Dmowski decided, and rightly, that the proper place to establish his headquarters was Paris; and here he formed in July, 1917, the Polish National

Committee. This came very soon to be recognised by the Allies as the spokesman of Polish interests.

Noting the splendid work done for the Czech cause by men like Professor Masaryk and Dr. Benesh, as well as the similar activities of the South Slav leaders, he invited Poles from the Austrian and Prussian provinces to join him, and, with the moral and material backing of the Polish emigrants in America, proceeded to create the nucleus of a Polish army in France. From the moment of the March revolution, he felt himself liberated from his one-time loyalties toward Imperial Russia, and he now set forth in a memorial to Balfour a plan for the creation of a large and powerful Polish state, to take the place in the east of the now disrupted Russia. The Allies, however, remained as non-committal as ever, being still unwilling to regard their eastern Ally as "out of the war." The general effect was beneficial, nevertheless, for no one could ignore the Poles any longer; and the time was soon to come when positive recognition of their claims would be inevitable.

The shadow side of the situation lay in the fact that there were now two bodies, one in Paris and one in Warsaw, claiming to represent the nation. One of them was in open collaboration with the Allies, the other was—at least formally, working with the Central Powers. True, the Paris Committee laid no claim to be a government, and thought of itself only as a sort of Foreign Office, but the year 1918 was to alter this. Wilson's statement of the Fourteen Points in January and the growing part America was playing in the war had their effect. A liberated Poland, including all lands indisputably Polish and possessing an outlet to the sea, was now an accepted war aim. The blunders of the Central Powers, in particular their exclusion of the Poles from any place in the negotiations that led up to the Treaty of Brest Litowsk, helped things forward. And when the province of Chelm was definitely conceded to the Ukrainians, even in Cracow the last vestige of faith in the promises of the Central Powers vanished over night. The position of the Paris Committee was immensely reinforced.

Already in the previous September the Council in Warsaw had obtained control of the School System and of the Law Courts. Other promises had been made, but they remained a dead letter. Changes of personnel in the Cabinet brought nothing concrete, and when the Allies at last came out in July, 1918, with a confirmation of Wilson's projects, the way out of all uncertainties seemed to be found. Nothing was needed now save the winning of the war, and the failure of all German offensives in France made this a foregone conclusion.

On June 22nd the First Division of the Polish Army in France was given its colours as a part of the Allied forces. Recruited largely from American Poles, it was now being joined by prisoners of war coming in from Russia and even from Italy. In October it was given a Commander in the person of Joseph Haller, who had led a portion of the Legions under Austrian auspices and had gone over to the Russians after the Treaty of Brest. In July Dmowski went to the U.S.A. by invitation of the National Alliance there, and had an opportunity of conferring with President Wilson in person. The ground had been well prepared by Polish leaders there, notably of course by Paderewski himself.

Dmowski arrived just in time. He soon discovered that the term "an outlet to the sea" was not understood by Wilson as giving Poland a piece of the Baltic coast-line; but only meant guarantees of the use of the Vistula river to its mouth. This would leave the Germans in complete control of the territory on both banks, much of it peopled by Poles. He set himself to repair this state of things, and provided in time a memorial and maps which were of great service later on during the Peace Conference. Wilson was still not quite convinced, but the course of events was to do much to clear the misunderstanding.

The war was nearing its close. The collapse of the Balkan front was soon followed by the surrender of the Austrian armies on the Piave, and the break-up of the Habsburg empire into its constituent parts. At the end of October, the Poles were masters of Galicia, and on November 11th came

the Armistice in France. An important aspect of this last, which has been overlooked, was that the Germans were to withdraw in the east only behind their pre-war frontiers. When Dmowski heard of this, he hurried to Washington and got the phrase inserted "as soon as the Allies demand this". His reason was that he feared an advance of Bolshevik forces on the heels of the German retirement, and wanted the Haller Army transported to Poland at once, in order to secure the country from confusion. In any case it would have left Poland under German occupation during the interim period until Peace should be achieved.

For this act Dmowski's political opponents have never forgiven him. It was no doubt performed in good faith, but at the least it showed how far he had lost touch with what was going on in the country. It not only betrayed how much the National Democrats were counting on diplomacy, instead of on the dynamic of the nation itself, but it seemed to have party ends in view rather than national ones. Haller's army, when it was finally permitted to get to Poland, did splendid work, but as part of what had already been formed there; and the turn events took was something far from what Dmowski would have planned.

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Already in September the Regency in Warsaw foresaw what was coming, and laid its plans accordingly. A formal request went to the German High Command to release Pilsudski, as being the one man whose abilities and prestige could deal with the situation. After long delays this step was taken by the new regime in Berlin, and on the morning of Armistice Day the one-time Commander of the Legions arrived in Warsaw, to be received with acclamation by the populace. Accepting the commission entrusted to him, he became Chief of the State, and at once set about getting the German garrisons out of the country. Inside of a week he had two significant achievements to his credit. A provisional Cabinet was formed with the Socialist Moraczewski as Prime Minister, and a General Staff with General

Stanislas Szeptycki as Chief. The interim governments set up in Cracow, Lublin and Cieszyn (Teschen) at once recognised Warsaw as their supreme authority, and the promise of a large measure of law and order were assured.

The position of the National Council in Paris was now very difficult indeed. At the instance of the French, who pointed to the example of the Czechs, it had proclaimed itself as the Provisional government of Poland, with Foreign Affairs and the Army as its special cares. But now even these, especially the latter, were taken out of its hands. Surprised by what happened, and annoyed by the presence of a government of the Left at home, its press began to denounce Pilsudski and his associates as "Bolsheviks", and as traitors to the cause of the Allies. Colour was lent to the charges by the fact that Pilsudski had entered on direct negotiations with the new Germany, and had even welcomed its envoy in Warsaw. He was even attacked for helping the garrisons out of Poland, as if he should have interned them, or even had them massacred ! A reading of the newspapers of those weeks would lead one to think that everything done in Poland was wrong, and that only disaster lay ahead.

Actually, of course, the very reverse was the case. Pilsudski had treated the Germans, a beaten foe, as chivalrously as they had treated him. He installed a Cabinet of the Left because he knew how strong the reaction was among his own people against all the forces of the Right they had suffered under for so long. At his door in the east was Bolshevism, to the west was a "red" Germany. The best thing he could do was to give responsibility at home to those who represented the masses rather than the classes, in order that they might be held firmly for the cause of national rather than class liberties. But he did it as a patriot, not as a party man. When former colleagues addressed him as "Comrade", he took them up shortly in memorable words:

"I have travelled with you in the same train as far as the station 'Poland', but there I left the train. Now I'm a Comrade no longer !"

The fact nevertheless remained, that at the very outset of her reappearance as a sovereign state on the arena of European affairs Poland was divided in her counsels. Something had to be done at once to heal the breach. The Chief of State asked the National Committee to send delegates to Warsaw for conference, but the first one to come, Professor Stanislas Grabski, busied himself rather with campaigning in the interests of his Party than in conferring with the government. Not until late in December did anything happen that promised a way out, and this time the envoy was Paderewski himself.

Going in a British gun-boat to Danzig, he made his way to Poznan, where he could be sure of a warm welcome both on national and on Party grounds. His coming was the signal for a mighty popular demonstration, which alarmed the still resident German garrison. The understanding that had been reached *ad interim* between the Poles of Poznan and the military governor snapped like a strained cable, and the Germans were soon forced out of the city. Fighting went on all over the province until the Germans had retired behind the ethnographic frontier, and Poznan was free. Meanwhile, Paderewski went on to Warsaw, where he arrived on January 3rd. Conferences began forthwith, and at first led to nothing. Better counsels soon prevailed, for the visitor saw that the stories told him about Bolshevism in Poland were nonsense, and that Pilsudski had the situation well in hand. An agreement was reached, by which Paderewski became Prime Minister of a national cabinet, while Pilsudski retained his command of the army. Dmowski was named first Polish delegate to the then assembling Peace Conference. Experts were to be sent at once to reinforce the Committee in Paris—historians, geographers and economists. The eminent musician himself, in his capacity of Foreign Minister, was appointed as second delegate.

Other and no less significant events were also taking place in the new state. A liberal basis for the franchise, giving the vote to citizens of both sexes who had reached the age of twenty-one, had been established already in

November. On January 26th general elections were held for the first Constituent Diet (Sejm). This body met on February 10th, Poznan being represented by the deputies who had formerly sat in Berlin. Pilsudski addressed it, laid down his temporary office, and was unanimously called on to take it back until a Constitution could be prepared, and elections of a state president be carried out. Thus, three months after the Armistice, Poland had a regularly elected parliament and a Cabinet of Ministers; as well as something like a united front in the face of the many dangers that still beset her. How these agencies went to work, and what they achieved, will be the subject of a later chapter. For the moment we must return to what was going on in Paris by way of settling the vexed question of national boundaries.

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Already in December Pilsudski had sent delegates to discuss matters with the National Committee in Paris, but they were not received. A second delegation, led by Michael Sokolnicki, set out in January, and after some delay on the French frontier, reached Paris in safety. Even then Dmowski was not quite ready to co-operate with Poles of the opposite Party, although what had taken place in Warsaw left him stranded and almost alone. Among the Allies the British were disposed to recognise *de facto* the government in Warsaw, and Dmowski was obliged to give in. An approach to a unified action was now possible in Paris, and at the end of January the Polish delegate had his first chance to put the case for Poland to the Supreme Council. He did it admirably, speaking for five hours—first in French and then in English. The direct result of this meeting was the decision to send a Special Commission of the Allies to Poland to study the situation on the spot. Sir Esme Howard (now Lord Howard of Penrith), was Head of the British section, and this body stayed long enough in Poland to get a fair idea of how things stood.

This step was the more necessary because of the wild

rumours and charges being circulated about Poland by various people to whom her reappearance on the map was uncomfortable. They included the crimes of imperialism, Bolshevism, pogroms of the Jews, and many more; and were the more dangerous because of the closely-drawn cordon that existed through that long winter between the west of Europe and the still unsettled new republics. This made the truth hard to get at, and one sometimes got the impression that even when got, it was unpalatable. Few people realised one essential fact, viz., that although the war was over in France it was not yet over in other parts of Europe. (In the case of Poland, as we shall see, it was not really over until the autumn of 1920.) In the south-east the Poles were disputing the claims of the Ukrainians to the city of Lwow, in the south-west they were faced by a Czech invasion, and were anxiously waiting for some decision about Prussian Silesia. Finally they had the Bolshevik forces all along their eastern borders, threatening openly to march over the dead body of Poland in order to give their hand to Socialist Germany. No wonder that the diplomats in Paris, few of whom knew anything at all about Central Europe, were nervous and an easy prey to alarms.

The tangled story of the next three months must be passed over here. What concerns us is rather the results obtained. On her common frontier with Germany Poland obtained by the Treaty a fair measure of justice, in so far as things were settled at all. A plebiscite was ordered in the southern counties of East Prussia, which when carried out in the summer of 1920 went for Germany. Danzig was made into a Free City, and destined to become the port of Poland. A second plebiscite was ordered in Upper Silesia, where two trying years were to pass before a frontier was drawn. Half of the Duchy of Teschen went to the Czechs, when that unhappy dispute was "solved" in 1920; while the ridge of the Carpathians was made the boundary line on the south. No settlement in regard to eastern frontiers was made at all in Paris. Finally, like other new states, Poland was asked to sign documents providing for fair and equal treatment of all national Minorities.

Haller's army was kept idle in France for five full months. Allied fears as to trouble it might make in Poland if allowed to move, German objections to its transportation across their territory, and, above all, the fears of the National Democrats that they were lost as soon as they let the army out of their hands, were responsible for the long delay. Meanwhile Poland suffered losses and sorrows because those trained troops were not at hand in time of need. At the middle of April they at last got under way; and four fine divisions were able to take part in the national holiday celebrations in Warsaw on May 3rd.

The new Commonwealth of Poland was formally recognised by France on February 24, by Great Britain and Italy a few days later, by the other Powers in turn, by Germany on May 18, and by Czechoslovakia ten days later. When the Polish delegates were permitted to put their names to the Treaty of Versailles on June 28 the last act in a long series was accomplished, and their country could at last be said to have been restored—at least on paper, to the map and councils of Europe.

CHAPTER V

THE VISAGE OF POLAND

OR

(THE POLISH COUNTRYSIDE)

WHEN using the term "Poland" we can mean any one of several things: the country, the state, the people, or even that intangible thing called the tradition. They are all wrapped up with one another; the people living in the country, and creating the state as an instrument to serve their common ends. About these we shall have much to say in the following chapters, but it is worth while to take a moment and look at the external face of things. These include the landscape, the climate, and the occupational interests of the inhabitants which are the source of all well-being. Without accepting the ancient view, made common coin by Buckle, Ratzel and others, that climate and surroundings determine the character of a generation, we can at least declare that in the long run work and the rewards of work go far in doing so. These, however, are conditioned by the physical environment.

In Chapter One the position of Poland on the map was made clear to any who did not know it. From this position follows what we call a temperate climate, though not quite a continental one. The influence of the Baltic, and even of the more distant Atlantic can be discerned, though to a less extent than in France or Germany. There are fairly hot summers, lovely autumns, and often long and severe winters. Spring is late, especially in the north-east, but it comes suddenly as in Canada. The nights here are

THE NEW POLAND



short in summer, for Wilno is almost in the latitude of Edinburgh. Growth is therefore faster than in the south. All this represents an ideal climate for the production of timber, bread-stuffs, roots of all kinds, linen and hemp, all fruits save tropical ones, and garden produce of every kind. Further dairying flourishes, and the breeding of fat cattle, pigs, and poultry. Polish geese have long been famous in Europe. All these branches of agriculture are being nurtured, in places on the most modern lines and with fine results. For the most part, nevertheless, until very recently the methods employed have been rather primitive, and the output far below the optimum.

Poland has a few leagues of sea-board, and she possesses thousands of lakes. Everywhere, then, fisher-folk will be found, though the proverb has it that the Pole is a land-animal. These fishermen are a type all their own. On the southern borders, far from the sea, are the lordly ranges of the Carpathians. Here one rightly expects to find Highlanders—a few hunters, but mostly herdsmen. This is the domain of sheep, where young and old wear homespun woollen garments, some of them original and pleasing in design. It is also the land of *bryndza*, the small cheeses from sheep-milk, shaped rather like a miniature air-bomb, and nearly as hard. Between these two extremes of sea and mountain the widest range of interests and occupations can be found—everything from which man can earn a living. Of course the soil is the source of most livelihoods, and where the quality is good and rainfall steady, tillage is a rewarding business. But where sand and gravel prevail, or where markets are distant and difficult to reach, life is hard, and the most backward conditions can be found even to-day. I have tramped through communities within twenty miles of Cracow, just behind the one-time Russian boundary, where there wasn't a well; and where the only ploughs in use were wooden ones, with the iron point to shoe them.

Just as in neighbouring countries, land tenure in Poland has been of diverse kinds. Commonest were the smaller

and larger estates, owned by the nobility or the Church—some of course by the state: with their forest ranges and pasture-land, their broad fields and their orchards, their fish-ponds and apiaries; with breweries and distilleries on one side, and saw-mills or cheese-factories or stone-quarries on the other. The work was done by communities of “souls” or “hands”, sometimes numbering hundreds, and living in one or more hamlets—often in anything but satisfactory conditions. This is the ancient picture of patriarchalism, which could be and often was something very fine, but with absentee ownership and the shortcomings of human nature in general could easily become a reproach. Hundreds of such more or less self-containing communities can still be found, scattered all over Poland, though the steady progress of agrarian reform is reducing their number from year to year. Some of the peasant workers have rented farms, in which case they possess their own implements and live stock. The majority have only a patch of garden around their cottage, or at best a plot farther afield for the winter’s potatoes. There are too many both landless and homeless, living in “rooms” and serving as casual labourers. Even married couples with children can be found among these, and the condition of such is not enviable.

Somewhere, on a central spot, stands the village church; often of brick, but in many cases of wood. The timber churches of Poland are one of the treasures of the nation. They reproduce in wood, both inside and out, the earmarks of mediaeval Gothic, and there are still standing a few that date from pre-Renaissance days. Most of the older ones perished by fire long since, and have been rebuilt. A closer study of these attractive buildings will more than reward the traveller. Smaller communities will not have a resident priest, but will be served from a neighbouring village. Indeed, not every hamlet has its church, but the one nearest to the manor is rarely without it. Few things have impressed me more in the districts far out to the east that were laid waste by the war, than the placing by the estate owner or his wife of the rebuilding of the village

house-of-prayer among the first things to be done in the work of reconstruction. The response of the common people is usually spontaneous. For them at least, even though the radio has already found its way into their cottage, the Church has a place in life nothing else can usurp.

Close by will be the village public-house. The proverb has it that where the Lord puts a church, the Devil at once builds a tavern. There is some point to this, since vodka is one of the passions of the Slavs. Less of late than it was; for the motive was too often that of relieving the dullness of life, and to-day many other things have come to help in this, less costly and less harmful. Kept usually by Jews, though here too a change is on the way, the tavern was too often the place where hard-earned money was not only spent but wasted. The Jew could usually read and write, he was often the friend or even the banker to the peasant; but he got himself well paid for all his services. On Sunday he kept open house. To church for Mass in the morning, to the tavern in the afternoon and evening for "music". By this was meant dancing and carousing, to which the younger generation especially was invited. The results were often evil for the community, but the tavern was the property of the lord of the manor, and his vodka or beer were on sale. Not to patronise him would have seemed dangerous. Anyway, there was no place else to go.

Not far away the village school. Of these there were grievously few in pre-war days; almost none in the Russian provinces. For every shilling spent in Polish lands on education a quarter of a century back, four and six are spent to-day! In what was Russia, the proportion is much higher. The quality of work done in the school-room was very uneven, depending on (i) the calibre of the teacher, (ii) the size of the class, (iii) the support given by the community. But the building did count, and the difference between the districts of Poland where schools were the rule and those where there were none is enormous.

On the heels of the school came in time other institu-

tions. A co-operative, which was hated by the tavern-keeper (who usually had a shop as well, to sell groceries, etc.), or even a community hall, which served a wide number of uses. One time a political meeting, the next a gathering of the members of the co-operative, then a social, or even—in later times, a film. Youth gatherings, drilling of the Fire Brigade, or debating the matter of better roads might also appear on the programme.

We shall come back in the sequel to the rapid pace of social change being affected all over Poland. Different people and agencies have taken the lead: the Squire, the priest, the teacher, or a political Party, even a youth group. The outstanding example of transformation led by the parish priest is Liskow, near Kalisz; which Father Blizinski has so improved in thirty years that returned emigrants from the New World rub their eyes. Fancy having electric light in a Polish cottage !

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But by no means all the rural landscapes are of the manor and village kind. Notably in the west and the south the older type of settlement is passing away, and the horizon is dotted with individual homesteads; each on its own holding, and each set off by the familiar land-marks of orchard and well-sweep. Here and there a wind mill is found, though the older type of mills has mostly disappeared. It is to these spots that the storks love to return as harbingers of spring, and rebuild their nests on the flat chimney-top. Both advantages and the reverse accrue from this type of community life. Social contacts are hampered, but there is less gossiping. As a rule it has evolved from the one-time joint holding of land by the whole village. In those days a Committee met every so many years, called in all the contracts and re-assigned the land, giving each householder something of the best, something of poorer, and even pieces of marsh or waste. As a rule the forest, if there was any, and the pasture-land remained "common". In consequence each holding consisted of a number of strips, often far apart, and inconvenient to work. Even where the

peasants owned their land for generations, the same condition might arise from the dividing it from time to time among heirs. This is all being altered in favour of single, contiguous wholes, by the process named from the French word *commassation*. In the long run it will make for a saner and more productive economy.

But there are large areas of Poland where big estates never were the rule, and where serfdom was hardly known. Examples of this are the uplands near the Carpathians (Podhale), and the Masovian plains east and north of Warsaw. Here have lived for centuries free farmers, the people who correspond most nearly to English yeomen. Their work and play have been well described in the novels of Eliza Orzeszkowa. Most of them are of gentle origin, and they are fiercely proud of the fact, recalling to the visitor the temper of the Scottish clansmen. Often poor, for the land shortage in parts of Poland has long been acute, they have never been servile; and the new opportunities now being given them to share in the common life will make them in time one of the bulwarks of the nation. The same is the case with their opposite numbers in the south-east, who are surrounded by the sea of Ukrainian life. Local feuds used to be common among them, but such lawlessness has passed away. Only the pinch of poverty drives them betimes to "direct action", and there was an element of this in the peasant riots in the southern provinces of which we heard much two years ago.

So much for the countryside, whose landscapes vary with the season of the year and with the elevation. One has great flat-lands studded with lakes, and rich in wild fowl, then rolling plains, broken in places by forest belts—beech, evergreen, or far out in the east by grand stretches of oak; and marked by lordly manors or even by the ruins of ancient castles. The mediaeval and renaissance fortress-homes of the Vistula area belong to the most picturesque and imposing in Europe, and still grander ones used to stand on the line of defence against the Turks to the east. Next come the foothills of the Carpathians, often themselves lower ranges of mountains, covered with great forests,

and peopled only in the valleys. Thus one approaches the Alps of Central Europe, known as the Tatras, and scarcely less sublime than the Swiss mountains themselves. In the bend of the Vistula is the modest *Massif Central* called the St. Cross Hills. From the record of a four days' tramping through them in 1924, I take the following:

"It had long been my wish to wander through this land, famous in story, and sacred because the scene of many a bloody struggle in 1863. Nestling in the elbow of the Vistula, wild and wooded, it is dotted with villages and utterly innocent of railways. There are not even good roads, as yet. The hardy people find markets of sorts at the country towns, of which Bodzentyn to the north and Opatow to the east are the most important. My way led eastward from Kielce, and the total distance to Sandomierz was about eighty miles. . . .

"The folk are poor for the most part, for stones abound, and until you approach Opatow the soil is light. Then begins, however, the wide wheat belt, stretching away to Lublin; and the culture of the sugar-beet is also found. There are grand manors with avenues leading to them, and steam threshers were at work on all sides. As a result the villagers live better, and evidences of order and plenty are many. . . .

"A peasant is ploughing with his oxen by the roadside not far from Kielce. He tells of the way the Russians dug trenches all along the high ridge to the south of us, and how the Germans spied them out from the air, and circumvented them. Then they cleared out, and were seen no more. He is glad that Poland is free, but he has his grouch. Times are hard!

"Bodzentyn has been a historic name. Twice at least fire has destroyed it utterly. In 1917 the church was saved with difficulty, but the place itself—a town of 3,000 inhabitants, is not yet all rebuilt. As I climb Crooked St. to the churchyard, I see a fine brick building nearing completion on my right. To my question what it is to be, I get the cheering answer, 'The new school!' The parish priest himself showed me the glories of his church, and they are many. A memorial tablet tells how Cardinal Olesnicki—a sort of Polish Wolsey, rebuilt the edifice on a grander scale after the fire of 1413. There is still in place a beautiful stone font from that time. The pulpit has a rail and canopy with the points of a star—a rare piece of woodwork. The High Altar is decorated with a picture from the Nurnberg school. . . .

"After a good night I visit Tarczek, to see the now restored church, which in style recalls Iffley at Oxford. . . . On my way again I let my eye run along the mountain ridge in front, and at

the eastern end I can see the Benedictine Monastery, which is my next objective. I reach it at last, tired and thirsty, for there was no spring to be found; and it was already one o'clock. The buildings are now used as a penitentiary—following the example of the Russians, and the more dangerous type of criminal is kept there. A guard was leading out three men, loaded with fetters, as I approached the gate. . . .

"Descending through the woods south-eastwards I set out for Lagow, where I shall spend the night. At the first village I am greeted by such an indignation meeting of geese as, wakened the guards on the Capitol when the Gauls were entering Rome. It passes, however, and I beg the old man who is tending them to get me some water. He does so, and proceeds to air his woes: how he lost one wife and married another, who has now left him; and how his children have got hold of his bit of property, and will not give him a cent! He is furious with her and them. 'May worms devour them!' is his malediction. Can I not advise him about getting a divorce?

"I leave Lagow early, for there is not much to see. The road is long, and I am grateful when a load of oats comes along and takes me aboard for the last four miles into Opatow. The great church can be seen first, standing above the town. I learn that the square has been renamed after President Wilson, and on it I find a good restaurant, where I get my first hot meal in three days. In St. Martin's church there are eloquently conceived frescoes, setting forth the wars with the Tartars and the Turks. In the left transept is one of the grandest tombs I have ever seen, that of Szydlowiecki, the able adviser of Sigismund I, who died in 1532. In the right transept is the altar of Our Lady, on which is placed a perfect gem of a Madonna, brought by Queen Bona from Florence. It is said to be by one of Raphael's masters. . . .

"About four I start for Sandomierz, and had covered nearly half the distance, when the sun set behind me in orange and golden glory. I had passed a huge sugar refinery, built close to the manor of the Karskis at Wlostow. On all sides one saw signs of good husbandry profiting from the richness of a fertile soil. My bed for the night was one of clover, in a farmer's hay-rick, and by eleven the next morning I am in Sandomierz."

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Of the Polish country towns, the first thing to be said is that they are much fewer and far between than, say, those of Saxony or Normandy. For reasons given in an earlier chapter, they fell on evil days for two whole centuries, and even in modern times they have remained but sorry samples of civilization. Mostly small, usually neglected and, until

recently, everywhere dirty, they might possess the marks of former splendour in the shape of a lofty parish church, an ancient priory, or even a *castellum*; but they had little to hold the visitor and much to frighten him away. In rare cases could one find a decent hostelry, and the mentality of the inhabitants was parochial in the extreme. Most of these townlets had come to house more Jews than Christians, the majority of them living in overcrowded conditions, and being parasites rather than citizens. Controlled from without, by Russian prefects, these communities could do little to promote pride of home or of profession, there was little of that solidarity that marks most corresponding places in western Europe. That was the state of things even ten years ago. To-day it is being revolutionised. We shall see in another place how this is being effected, and what is taking place both east and west of the Vistula. Not only will the appearance of things be other, but the economic and cultural vacuum that every such place used to be, will give way to something dynamic and arresting.

Where industry had already established itself, this vacuity has long since been banished. The landscape too is a new one, not changed for the better as a rule; but blocked by the smoke-stacks which rise above foundries or other plants, and disfigured by the slums that surround them. In the place of barter a money economy now obtains. Shops, banks, electric lighting, hard roads and the bustle of business are found on every hand. Here too overcrowding prevails, and the mentality of the workers is quite another than that of the villagers. Materialism has infected them, and the secularisation that usually goes with it. In good times hustle, in bad ones sullen discontent. To cure this, a combination is being tried out in the new Central Industrial Area (of which more later), of part-time tilling of small holdings and part-time work in the rising factories. In this way a balance of interests can be retained, and the dangers of the trade cycle in part obviated.

But the average tourist in Poland visits for the most part only the larger cities. These too present striking contrasts: the old and the new, the ugly and the beautiful, the sordid

and the joyful. Some of them contain samples of ancient Gothic and newer baroque splendour which will startle even the travelled observer. There is nothing in Poland quite to rival the view of the Hradcany in Prague from the Charles Bridge, or to equal the charm of Rothenburg. No fabric satisfies the eye quite in the way Windsor does, unless it be romantic Sandomierz. But among the most impressive views on the continent is that of the Wawel in Cracow from the iron bridge that leads to Debniki. Scarcely less picturesque are Lwow and Grodno; and as for Wilno, when even a part of the plans now under way have been completed, I venture the prediction that it will become one of the sights of Europe. No one who marks the features that are at hand to make this possible—the old city, the castle above it, the hills all around, the adjacent river, not to mention the forest of church towers and cupolas, the palaces and squares, and the quaint curving streets, can have any doubts that here in time something almost unique will emerge. Striking remnants of old fortifications can be found in many places—those of Cracow are the best known; including the newly-uncovered old-town wall of the capital itself, whose very existence had been long in doubt. Gniezno itself, the Canterbury of Poland, is less attractive; but not far away, at Biskupin on Lake Goplo, are excavations of prehistoric human habitations of astonishing completeness.

At bottom, the greatest single glory of Poland is the Vistula. Again, for sheer grandeur it cannot compare with the Rhine, nor does it equal the finer parts of the Danube. For “liquid history” it may fall behind the Thames. The greater part of its course is through open plains, which at times are monotonous. Nevertheless, all the way from the Benedictine abbey of Tyniets above Cracow, past the Wawel and Wisnica, and on to Sandomierz; past the curious “granaries” of Kazimierz, past Pulawy and Czersk, past Warsaw and Modlin, on to Wladawek and imposing Plock, till one reaches the beauties of Torun, and Chelm, and the fabric of the German Marienburg, and of Danzig itself—who can deny the variety of impressions, or the

richness of the traditions here displayed ? Once traversed by barges and galleys, and used in every age by the log-drivers with their great rafts of timber, it will soon again become a highway of commerce, far surpassing anything seen of old. The lower reaches are an integral part of the inland water-route, which the next generation should see linking up the Black Sea via the Dnieper with the Baltic and the west.

Like so many other things in Poland the Vistula simply revels in possibilities. At times it is unruly, and floods the countryside, far and near. That too needs much toil to put and keep in order ; but one would not have it otherwise, for it means power, and life. From every point of view, what has been done seems so little, and there is so much still to do. For a hundred miles at a time, one did not even find a bridge ! Will the nation rise to the occasion ? Its friends are in no kind of doubt as to the answer.

Right through the 19th century Poland was thought of as *la terre inconnue*. It was in truth the least known of all the countries of the continent, for a number of reasons, which have been suggested already. This state of things is passed, and a good beginning has been made of opening Poland to the tourist and the traveller. The language difficulty is a real one. but no one need let it disturb him. Friends will be found everywhere to rescue those in trouble. A wealth of unexplored wonders is waiting to be discovered, and those who make the venture will be well repaid.

CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST TWENTY YEARS—I

Two decades of history is not much, but in this hurried twentieth century they seem to contain more of living than "a cycle of Cathay". Poland has shared the fate of Europe, both political and economic, since the Great War, but has escaped as yet the unforeseen turmoil we have witnessed in Italy, Germany and Spain. Not a year has been without its anxieties, but the fates have been kindly; and the courage of the nation's leaders, combined with the toughness of fibre of the common people, has seen things safely through. What is more, the outlook has got steadily better, both within and without the country. A bird's eye view of the period, even though it recounts facts known to well-informed readers, seems desirable at this point, before we take up specific questions in more detail.

It is usual to see this period in three parts: seven years of uncertain steering; nine years of straight sailing, until the death of Marshal Pilsudski in March 1935, and four years of getting adjusted to going without him. From the economic point of view, the division of time would be different. We should have five years of unsteady money conditions (inflation), six years of relatively stable currency with prosperity, four years of fighting the depression, and five years of slow but sure recovery. Each of these stages had its successes and its disappointments, in each one experiments of various kinds, and from each useful lessons were learned.

The fixed, ~~not~~ supreme importance, whether politically or otherwise, was the summer of 1926. At the

middle of May Pilsudski came out of four years of voluntary retirement in order to take charge of things; and in the next months came the general strike in England, which gave Poland a chance to get hold of northern European markets for her most available export commodity. Thanks to this, not only was confidence restored in the minds of a restless people, but the balance was readjusted of a tottering economic structure. Though hard put to by the world crisis, Poland has never turned back since that time. Both at home and in her relations with her neighbours distinct improvement is to be noted on all lines. Income and expenditure mounted in a way few could have foreseen, something like well-being was brought back to a land harrowed by seven years of war. As for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry had changed hands fifteen times in seven years, so that there could be no talk of a Foreign Policy beyond loyal co-operation in and with the League of Nations. It was now to be guided by one hand for six years, and by a second for nearly seven.

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The early years were in every way difficult. Everything had to be done, and there were no means to work with. Such revenue as could be squeezed by hook or by crook from an almost exhausted people, had to be spent on defending the new commonwealth from invasion. In addition to local struggles with the Ukrainians, the Czechs and the Germans, a first class war was faced with Bolshevik Russia. By the spring of 1919 Pilsudski felt himself strong enough to move beyond the Bug and the Niemen, to the liberation of Wilno and its territories. After a short armistice with the Ukrainians in the south, forced on the Poles by the Allied counsels, permission was given to occupy the lands as far as the one-time Austrian frontier—the river Zbrucz. Along this line, and on its counterpart far east, Polish troops kept watch—often without proper food, or shelter, during the succeeding winter. Everyone knew that a trial of strength was ahead.

In the spring of 1920, having formed an alliance with the anti-Bolshevik Ukrainian leader, Petlura, the Polish commander decided to forestall the Bolshevik attack he knew was coming, and advanced on Kiev. His plan was to get an independent Ukraine, west of the Dnieper, and federate it with Poland. His forces were not strong enough for this, and Ukrainian support was not forthcoming; so a hasty withdrawal was necessary. Meantime the reorganised Russian armies, under their able young leader Tukhachevsky, had broken through the Polish front in the north, and a disastrous retreat was entered on. Not even the line of the Niemen could be held, and by the end of July the invading armies were in front of Warsaw. The story of the unexpected, almost miraculous rescue of the capital and the Polish armies by the able strategy of Pilsudski (with the support and counsel of Marshal Weygand and a group of French officers), can be read in Lord D'Abernon's book. What looked on August 15 like a threat to the very existence of the state, was turned into a momentous victory, and was followed up zealously until not a Russian regiment stood on Polish soil. Peace negotiations were begun, and the Treaty of Riga finally signed in March 1921. In addition to settling a frontier, and arranging other disputes, it provided for the restoration of the countless treasures carried off by the Russian rulers during four generations: including the Zaluski library, one of the finest in eighteenth century Europe, the famous Wawel arrasses—dating from Renaissance times, and rich artistic and archivist treasures that were of no value to Russia. The Bolshevik authorities co-operated loyally in the carrying-out of this task of restitution, which took years for completion.

Meantime, early in 1920, with the coming of the High Commissioner to reside in Danzig, Poland took formal possession of the area west of the lower Vistula reaching to the Baltic, since popularly known as the Corridor. Further, the difficult settlement of the dispute about the rich industrial and farm lands of Upper Silesia was at last on the way. A plebiscite was being prepared, allied

troops were in possession of the land, and both sides were busy consolidating their voting strength. When it came, in March 1921, out of every twelve votes seven went for Germany, and five for Poland. As the two nations were hopelessly mixed together, a frontier was drawn on the proportional basis, which cut right through the highly organised industrial "triangle". Special agencies of the League were sent to Silesia for an interim period of fifteen years (1922-37), to watch over the "patient". Thanks to their work, and to the fine spirit of collaboration shown by the densest population area east of the Rheinland, the frontier was never closed during the fifteen years, and the fears of those who said that the new arrangement could not work have not been realised.

The same March week that brought the Treaty of Riga and the plebiscite in Silesia, saw another event of no less significance for the new Poland. Two years of hard work on various projects for a Constitution, were crowned by the acceptance in the Diet of an instrument that was hailed as one of the most liberal in Europe, but was to be the source of much troubles later on. The Constitution, swinging to the opposite extreme after a century of despotism, emphasised the rights of the individual citizen, but failed to provide a strong and unbroken executive for the body politic. Great stress on liberty, but not enough on discipline. In a word, the French model was followed, which made the President a decoration rather than an administrator; and made the Prime Minister a puppet in the hands of the Diet. This sort of thing might be tried in a country where political traditions have become mature, but it was perilous in a land where a majority of the deputies were novices, and where no routine of Government had been attained at all. With something like a score of Parties in the Diet, too many of whom thought in terms only of their own group interests, the work of rebuilding the nation and the state was crippled from the start. Because he saw this quite clearly, Pilsudski declined the offered post of President, and withdrew from public affairs. He wanted to give others the chance to learn, from bitter experience, what he himself divined.

The first President, a distinguished engineer, was shot after a few weeks of office, by a fanatical National Democrat, because he was the nominee of the Left, and had the support of the non-Polish Minorities. His successor, Stanislas Wojciechowski, who had made himself before the war into a national figure by being the "Father" of the Co-operative movement, held office until May 1926. He enjoyed the respect of the nation, but could exercise no influence on the course of events at all. Though an old colleague of the Marshal, he opposed the latter's plan in May 1926 as illegal, and was forced to resign. His successor, Professor Ignace Moscicki, an eminent scientist, held office for seven years, and was re-elected for a second term in 1933.

Two questions were clamouring for an answer right from the start in the new Poland: that of land reform, and that of the ordering of the currency. The strong Peasant representation in the first Diet, which accepted as leader the one-time farmer member of the Vienna *Reichsrath*, Vincent Vitos (although it was far from sharing all his political views) were well aware of what was being done with the land not only in Soviet Russia but also in Roumania and elsewhere. The members demanded the parcellation of the big estates, even without compensation, but they did not get their way. Nonetheless, a resolution went through in July 1919, which provided for drastic measures of agrarian reform. Owing to the war-time conditions, nothing was done to implement this, beyond re-affirming it in 1920; and when Vitos took the matter up during a second premiership in 1923, his government was overthrown. There was plenty of support in the country for solid reforms, but no sympathy with extreme measures, and a firm front against any inroads on the principle of private property. Officially, then, little was done for some years about the land. In actual fact, large tracts of land passed out of the hands of big estate owners during these years, chiefly owing to the lack of capital to "rehabilitate", or from the inability to pay taxes. There are those who hold that, by helping on the

process of an open market and free purchase, more could have been done to solve the land problem privately than has been achieved in later years by the state. Thousands of peasants had savings hidden in their "stocking" when the war ended, and they would have put them into land, had not the authorities frowned on the idea.

As for the currency, with which was bound up the whole future of public finance, things started badly. Poland had been stripped of all liquid resources, and was left to begin her work with two kinds of paper currency—German marks and Austrian crowns. For neither of these was there a penny of backing, beyond the good-will of the community. In the outside world the Polish cause had many friends, and enormous help was given in the form of food-stuffs, war-materials, and even other goods: but no money. Having no "coverage" the marks and crowns soon began to fall in value, the moment the frontiers to the outside world were opened and real money, notably American dollars, began to come in. In order to get enough to go on with, the printing-press was resorted to; which meant inflation, as everyone knew. There seemed to be no other way; the more so as revenue was hard to come by. The masses of the people had paid little or no taxes in war-time, why should they begin now? The authorities, anxious not to antagonise peasants who were Polish beyond doubt, but who had inborn ideas about self-preservation as a class, did not like to bear down too severely. Vast numbers of homesteads had been ruined, and required every effort to put them on their feet again. Better leave the farmer to re-establish himself, for in the long run he will pay the more taxes, and with at best a grumble!

What made everything harder was (i) the still prevailing war conditions, and (ii) the crippled state of industry, which made the production of goods for export virtually impossible. How adverse the balance of trade was in these years, and with disastrous effects on the value of the currency, may be seen from these figures (in millions of gold francs):

	Exports	Imports
1920	259	1248
1921	274	847
1922	614	801
1923	1200	1122

Buying heavily and selling almost nothing for two years dislocated the whole machine, and things would have been far worse had it not been for the bringing or sending home of American dollars—the saving of Polish emigrants, whose total in a single year had been estimated at not less than a hundred millions ! Put into circulation, used to rebuild homes or to start enterprises, this sum almost met the deficit in 1921, and kept those responsible for the guidance of affairs from desperation. Inflation went on, nevertheless, the printing-press working harder than ever. The moment the weekly, or monthly, wage was paid, the only thing to do was to spend the money forthwith; for the next day it could have lost half its worth. In July 1921 it took 2000 marks to buy a dollar (instead of four); six months later it took 3500; in January 1923 ten times that number; after which the sliding was catastrophic, until the price was nine millions ! Such a state of things was ruinous, not only to trade but also to thrift. Demoralisation was the only possible outcome. In effect, though it was illegal, all major transactions went on in dollars; until the day of reckoning could no longer be put off.

The ungrateful task of cleansing these Augean stables fell to a man who since student days had been in the forefront of the struggle for national liberties, but on the conservative side. His name was Ladislas Grabski (nomen omen !), and the time will come when his services to Poland will be rated higher than they have been as yet. In December 1923 he accepted the task of forming a Cabinet, he himself taking the Finance portfolio. Knowing that palliatives were of no avail, whether more taxes or less expenditure, or even capital levies, he grasped the nettle with courage, resolved to put an end to the pauperisation of the country. From the Diet he asked for dictatorial powers, and then brought in bills proposing to add to the

things already tried the fixing of the zloty (guilder) as the unit of coinage at the value of the gold frank, the stopping of all currency emission, and the founding of a Polish Bank to watch over the issuing of coinage for the future. He went on to put monthly budgets on the place of the yearly one, and was soon able to get them balanced. Some sternness in the exaction of taxes helped the cause forward, inside of a year the last of the marks disappeared, and Poland had "real" money—5.18 units to the gold dollar.

But the victory was not yet won. In retrospect one can see that the franc was too high a unit to set in a land where goods of all kinds have always been cheap, and a lower standard would have been wiser. As a result, where there had been too much money before, there was now too little. All costs, especially those of producing goods, went up, unemployment increased; and a poor harvest made suffering acute. Another blow fell in 1925, when the Germans denounced the Trade Agreement, and declined to take any more Polish coal. With an adverse balance of trade, the value of the zloty began to decline; disguised inflation in the form of bullion and Treasury notes helping it on. Again a crisis of confidence was at hand, this time with the whole administration. In 1923 the English finance expert Hilton Young had served Poland well, now there was called in the Princeton professor Kemmerer. He soon confirmed the view that the causes of the trouble were more psychological than real. A serious budget deficit was recorded in 1925, and a worse one was in prospect for the next year. One government fell in November 1925, another in the following April. The result was the action of Pilsudski in May, which, in effect, put an end to the old style of Party Government for years to come.

Those of us who watched on the spot what was happening, were very anxious for the first few days, not being able to form any judgment as to the outcome. Only for a few days, however; for a general sense of relief could be felt

almost at once all over the country. "At last we have someone at the head who knows what he wants, and has the courage to take charge!" The whole atmosphere of business and industry, an important matter even in Poland, was changed even in a few weeks; and the fortunate chance to market Polish coal abroad, soon restored the balance of trade. The zloty was "pegged" at just under nine to the dollar, or forty-four to the gold pound. Here it has remained ever since, one of the most secure currencies in Europe. The obtaining in 1927 of what is known as the Dillon loan of \$70,000,000 made possible the stabilising of the zloty and opened a new era in Polish economic life.

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A word now about each of several happenings during this first seven years of freedom, which had a special meaning for the nation and the state. I refer to the recovering of Wilno, to the attempt to solve the problem of East Galicia, to the first conferences of the Baltic Powers, and to the building of the new seaport of Gdynia.

Six centuries ago Wilno was the capital of a vast Lithuanian Empire of which, as their historians admit, only one-eighth of the population was Lithuanian. After the union with Poland important changes followed, thanks chiefly to the influences of the Catholic Church; and Wilno became in time a Polish city as surely as Breslau became German, or Strassburg in later days French. We have seen how it was the chief centre of the Polish romantic movement after 1815, and the only other influence of note—apart from the Russian elements introduced in the nineteenth century, was a large Jewish population. This state of things was no doubt a great grief to the leaders of the resurgent Lithuanian people, who fought and suffered along with the Poles under the yoke of Tsardom and in a common cause. They held to the view that Wilno was their "sacred" city, although the historic process had changed things completely. One other essential thing must be remembered. Had not the Poles defeated the Bolshevik armies in 1920 there would not have been either a free Poland or

a free Lithuania. Once this was achieved it was impossible that any other claim to Wilno should compete with that of the Poles. There are less than ten per cent of Lithuanians in the city, and the surrounding population is White Ruthenian and Polish. It would have been a grave political blunder for the Lithuanians to get the extensive frontiers demanded by the extremists, just as the boundaries of pre-partition days would have been a misfortune for Poland. To add large and unwilling minorities to any state does great harm and can only bring trouble to all concerned.

What actually decided the matter, of course, was the personal affection of Marshal Pilsudski for this charming and historic city in which he had grown up. The action taken was in defiance of instructions from the Allied Powers, but the people who took it knew more about what needed to be done than did the statesmen of Western Europe.

The problem of East Galicia, in which there is a two-thirds or more Ukrainian Minority, almost exclusively peasant, was a much more serious one. Quite as thorny as, and even more complex than, the Irish question, it would need a small volume to do it even scant justice. That is why nothing makes me more annoyed than to hear journalists and travellers who have spent three days in some part of the country, coming back to tell the west of Europe "all about the Ukrainians". Dissonances that have roots going back four hundred years at the least, cannot be simplified into a formula or two: and any attempt to seek simple solutions for such issues is doomed to failure.

Among the inherent difficulties to be faced by the Poles were these: (i) the presence of a large Polish Minority, domiciled for centuries inside the Ukrainian area, (ii) the fact that the five million non-Poles dwelling in this land are a fraction of the very large people (or nation) dwelling in southern Russia, (iii) the difficulty caused by the existence of the Uniate Church, to which nearly half of the Polish Ukrainians belong, whose relations with their Orthodox neighbours in Poland are not good, (iv) the wide differences of opinion existing among the Minority as to what they

should get, not to mention the differing levels of intelligence ranging from illiteracy to holders of university degrees. The spear-head of the Nationalist Movement are the clergy of the Uniate Church, whose Archbishop is the veteran Andrew Szeptycki, brother of the Polish general.

In December 1919 the Allied Powers offered Poland a mandate for East Galicia for twenty-five years, but it was not accepted. The frontiers were fixed by the Treaty of Riga, but the Powers were not willing to confirm them. Not until March 1923 was this step taken, with the proviso that autonomy should be granted to the three voyevod ships, i.e. provinces, with Ukrainian majorities. A statute providing for such local self-government had already been taken in hand by the Cabinet formed with Julian Nowak, former Rector of the University of Cracow as Prime Minister. Had this come into force, the way might have been opened for better relations between neighbour and rival peoples. Unfortunately the extremists on both sides put every obstacle in the way, and the plan remained on paper. It would have needed a much stronger government than Poland possessed at that time, to carry it out. What is more, it would have been a somewhat risky experiment, owing to the uncertain conditions obtaining over the frontier to the east. In its stead came in July 1924 a series of statutes guaranteeing to all minorities the right to the use of their mother tongue. In the mixed language districts of east Galicia, a bi-lingual system of schools was ordained, so that Polish would be taught in Ukrainian schools and Ukrainian in Polish. To later phases of this struggle for rights and privileges, we shall return below.

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Almost as soon as the struggle with the Soviets was settled, the Poles began to cultivate closer relations with their neighbour Baltic Powers. It is important to realize that from the start the Poles regarded themselves as belonging to the Baltic basin, and as in no way being one of the Succession States, even though part of Poland had belonged

to Austria. For this reason there was no desire at any time to join the Little Entente, which was an affair of the Danubian Lands alone. Closer relations with her Baltic neighbours have rightly been a part of Polish foreign policy. The beginnings could be made only with the new states, since the Germans were irreconcilable, owing to the lost provinces. The first meeting of representatives, with Lithuania absent, took place in Tallinn in 1922. A second was held in Warsaw a year and a half later, and a more formal conference took place in January 1925 in Helsinki. Each time a new step forward was taken in outlining a common peace policy for the Baltic basin, and on the last occasion, in view of a threat of Communist insurrection in Esthonia, a plan for common action was taken in the event of any trouble introduced by outside agencies. This was signed by the Four Powers, Finland, Esthonia, Latvia and Poland. It was conceived in the spirit of the Geneva Protocols, whose execution had not yet been decreed at Whitehall.

Meantime, something of quite a different character was under way, an enterprise into which the will of the whole nation entered, and whose completion has been of paramount importance for the stability of the Commonwealth. I refer to the transforming of the fishing village of Gdynia, just above Danzig on the map, into a national harbour and seaport. This was the first of the larger projects to be undertaken by the new state, and it has fully justified the hopes reposed in it. To add another seaport on the Baltic looked superfluous, but the experiences of 1920 taught the Poles that Danzig could not be depended on. Pressure from Berlin compelled its inhabitants to renounce their own better interests, so that Poland could at any time have her channel of export and import cut off. With the help of French capital, the huge engineering task of building the harbour with all its modern machinery, was carried out in a few years, chiefly under the direction of Eugene Kwiatkowski, the present Minister of Finance. Polish sea-going vessels, sailing from a Polish port, began to link up the nation with both the old and the new world.

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In 1922 the sea-trade was seven per cent of the whole. In 1926 it was one-quarter. In 1932 two-thirds of all Poland's trade went by sea-routes, Gdynia and Danzig sharing it between them. One can see why the new port has a significance not only economic but also spiritual. It is the guarantee of the independence and liberty of the Polish nation.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST TWENTY YEARS—II

THE second seven years of Polish independence was no longer one of experimentation, of trial and error, as the first had been; yet it was, at bottom, one great experiment, transcending all others. One might describe it as an effort to solve the vexed and vexing question of the relation between the government and the governed, so that the former would not be hampered at every turn and often for irrelevant reasons, while the latter would retain liberties of person and property, and some share in the handling of affairs. Authority was to be established, and without a resort to dictatorship, a muzzling of the press, or a silencing of the right to criticism.

Formally, the change might be described as a rejection of the French pattern of republicanism in favour of the American. The President was given, first in practice and then in the April Constitution of 1935 in theory, extensive executive powers, and he possessed an authority from now on which not even the Diet could question. With the close assistance of the key members of his Cabinet, he formed a sort of Governing Group, which remained as before responsible to the nation through the Diet, but depended on their own knowledge as "experts" for the decisions of note that had to be made. In the back-ground was to stand, for nine years, the figure of the Marshal, who became from now on the anchor of the state. He had little respect for the Diet, though he believed in parliamentary institutions in principle. From time to time he would lecture the deputies like naughty children, mostly—it must

be admitted, with right on his side. The Diet retained as before control over public finance, but could not go on interminably obstructing. After a certain time, if the new budget was not voted, the one of the previous year became effective.

What the Marshal was after was the breaking-up of the left-overs of political leadership that had flourished in pre-war days in Vienna, Berlin and St. Petersburg. He did not trust their judgment or their goodwill under entirely changed conditions. He thus set himself from the start to put an end to existing Party cliques, and to get created a sort of Centrum—chiefly from elements that had not been active in politics heretofore, to be called a Non-Party Block for Co-operation with the Government. It took four years of steady effort, and two general elections, to achieve this end. Some of the methods used at election time could only be described by the American term "railroading"; and what gave offence most was the arrest of certain outspoken Oppositionist leaders like Korfanty (the Christian Democrat from Silesia) and the Peasant leader Vitos, before the 1930 election, in order to silence for a moment the political hubbub. They were shut up in the fortress of Brest, and not treated with special courtesy. Their names were not taken from the lists of candidates, however, and they could be elected as anyone else.

Action of this sort is always regrettable, and rarely justified. A storm broke out at the time, notably in university circles, over what was felt by many to be a flouting of the law. It was certainly a violation of the sanctity of civil rights, something Poles cherish highly. Viewed in perspective, it is nevertheless seen to be mildness itself, by comparison with what has gone on in other European lands. Moreover, considering the issues at stake and the element of personal ambition that was not lacking in certain Party leaders, the historian of the future may well decide that what was done was a *malum necessarium*.

Nothing good was likely to come for the new Poland from a monopoly of political leadership on the part of men who had grown old in their trade in the work-shops of the

imperial capitals. Their whole mentality had been rather one of opposition than of co-operation; they had not accepted in their hearts the principle of "give and take", of "H.M. most loyal Opposition", but were wedded to sectional, or even class interests. Time, of course, would heal this; but the question was whether things could be left to drift, while time was doing its work. It was with this in mind that Pilsudski made one of his famous *obiter dicta*. He was entering the cemetery on the Wola plain outside Warsaw, walking with a friend behind the coffin of one of their former fellow-workers. As they passed the gates he pointed to the coffin and said, in his whimsical way: "There goes another of the obstacles to the New Poland !"

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From the moment of his return to office in May 1926, he set himself to bring into public service people who had never been there, chiefly because they hated party politics. Two approaches gave hints of his plans. One was to the Heads of the great families, when he visited the Radziwills at Nieswiez, the other—not made by the Marshal himself, to the big industrialists in Lodzh. Both these bore fruit, which was a blessing; for the path thus entered on was no easy one to take. There were two good reasons. Such overtures would mean an open breach with his former colleagues, the Socialists—some of whom, indeed, had parted company with him long since. They were loyal Poles, but they felt with equal keenness the neglected conditions of the masses, and they feared that Pilsudski did not realise them enough. On the other hand, these tactics meant poaching on the preserves of National Democracy, which had always sought to gather the well-to-do under its banner, though by no means with success. One should add that a large part of Peasant support had to be sacrificed as well, for the time being at least; for the devout ones among the peasants mistrusted the socialist in Pilsudski, and all of them mistrusted the landed gentleman.

In spite of these difficulties, a distinct victory was won for the new "course" in 1928, the new Party—known as

that of Sanitation (meaning "setting one's house in order") or familiarly as the B.B., winning one-third of the seats in the Diet. Most of them were taken from the Right and the old Centre. It was to be noted that the Ukrainians raised their representation from 21 deputies to 42. When one realises that in previous Diets there had been at least a score of Party groups, and that in the 1928 elections 34 different groups were competing for votes, the extent of the success can be measured. The majority of these groups were now to be cleared out, and those that were left to be given a properly Polish (or national Minority) orientation.

The way was now easier, but an absolute majority was not yet in sight. The story of obstructionist tactics during the next two years can be read in Machray's book. Cabinet changes were frequent, continuity of policy—whether at home or abroad, was impossible, by no combination of parties could anything like a stable backing for a government be formed. The international situation was not good, and the world depression was already knocking at Poland's door. In the summer of 1930 Pilsudski himself became Prime Minister, and on August 30 the President dissolved the Diet. General elections were ordained for November. Even now a score of Parties were competing, but popular sentiment had consolidated for the Non-Party Bloc. The result was 247 seats for the government, which meant more than half the total number of deputies. The Peasant groups lost badly, so did the Minorities. Only the National Democrats slightly increased their numbers. Thus was won, some have thought at too high a price, a victory for positive action in government; for a working majority that would make possible continuity and firmness of policy. The Marshal had been given a mandate—of that there could be no question. And it was the highest time. One can only imagine what might have happened in Poland in the difficult years 1930–32, had these four years of co-ordination work not been done! The economic *impasse* alone would have thrust the country into chaos, had it not possessed an administration that could proceed with confidence, and

that used the best brains available, irrespective of party affiliations.

Poland suffered less, relatively, from the world depression than did the industrialised nations of the west. Her economy was not so much a money one, having still a large element of barter in it. Not having been able to borrow abroad, as others had borrowed, she was not "hit" in the same way. Not having risen so high on the wave of "prosperity", she could not fall so far. True, the years 1927-29 had been bonanza years, at least by comparison with the early twenties. Export and import totals had touched new heights, as these figures (in millions of zlotys) will show:

	Exports	Imports
1923	2056	
1926	2246	1539
1928	2508	3362
1929	2813	3111

It is noticeable that imports outrun considerably exports, not a desirable state of things, but unavoidable in a land whose export commodities were mostly food-stuffs and raw materials, commanding low prices, while the import was largely manufactured goods, demanding the highest prices. Only after 1930, when severe restrictions were laid on imports, did this relation change. As we shall see, the totals for both columns were cut in two, or even in three by the crisis years, and have remained at far lower levels even to-day.

Prosperity made possible a marked increase in revenues, and so in public expenditure. Where so much was to be done, and when the money was available, the only thing to do was to use it. The advance in this regard is shown thus:

	Revenue	Expenditure
1925-6	1745	1883
1927-8	1990	1988
1928-9	3008	2841

A curious incident connected with this higher expenditure shows how far, even under the new conditions, the Diet

was from resigning its rights to control public monies. Finance Minister Czechowicz permitted the use in 1927-28 of about £14,000,000 more than had been projected or passed by the Diet. In other words, when it was seen that money was available from increased revenues, and that there were useful things needing to be done, supplementary estimates were introduced, but they were not passed by the Diet. The figures all appeared in the Statistical Bulletins, and there was no attempt at secrecy. Further the money went for the most part into public improvements—bridges, public buildings, water-ways, etc. But it happened that this expenditure had been simultaneous with the campaign to win the 1928 elections, and it had no doubt helped to win votes. Technically the Minister had been guilty of a misdemeanour; but the decision of a majority in the Diet to impeach him was in reality an attack on the man behind the scenes—Pilsudski himself. The trial took place at the end of June 1929, and the Marshal was among the witnesses. He made a pretty stern onslaught on the whole condition of things, in particular on the Diet; and declared that the crime of Czechowicz was only a "ritual" one. The Courts found the Minister not to be guilty, largely because the whole charge was demonstrated to have political rather than legal foundations.

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The world depression affected Poland chiefly because of the surplus stocks (sic !) of food-stuffs and raw materials on hand, on whose export Poland had to depend for means to purchase needed commodities. Nor did it help the matter that harvests were uniformly good, that of 1932 better than all ! The nation was back for a time nearer to the state of nature. No one needed to go hungry, but there was no money anywhere to get but more than the bare necessities of life. The "over-production" sent prices down, so that many staples e.g. rye, were far cheaper in the outside world than in Poland. The primary producer could not get for his product the return of the outlay in order to produce it. As a result there was a wide-spread

misery in many parts of rural Poland, and the purchasing power of the masses of the people dropped to nil. This meant a corresponding blow to all home industries, which found marketing abroad somewhat difficult owing to stiff competition, and which were rightly hoping for a marked expansion of home markets. The tax-paying capacity of the whole nation was at once threatened, and the hard struggle to keep a proper balance began. The change in positions is shown thus:

	Revenue	Expenditure
1931-2	2261	2468
1932-3	2000	2245
1933-4	1860	2231

Revenue had dropped by nearly forty per cent since 1929, and expenditure had to be cut accordingly. Even so it could not be cut fast enough, and already in 1930-31 there was a deficit. This was met from accumulated reserves, but the tendency continued and all reserves were soon used up. A serious crisis was only averted by the floating of an internal loan, in which more than gentle suasion was used, and it succeeded beyond expectations. The student of events must admire the way the nation, in particular poorly paid public servants such as school-teachers, pulled their belts tighter, and resolved to do with less, in order that the public cause might stand.

No small help in these years was effected by the Hoover Moratorium, which suspended the servicing of war debts. The "axe" was used pretty freely inside the administration itself, and the very deserving cause that suffered keenly was education. We shall refer to this set-back in the sequel, and can only note here that along with the losses there were also gains. A "reform" of the Middle School system was undertaken, and sweeping reductions were also made in the budgets of the universities. Quite a number of "chairs" were abolished; some of the men thus pensioned off being got out of the way for political reasons. The army too was bound to suffer, and such vitally needed public works as roads and canals could get no attention at all.

The decision of the authorities not to follow the example of England in 1931 and go off the gold standard, and the controversy that has raged around this decision will be discussed later. The grounds were psychological, and they have been justified by events. One of the most needed things in the new Poland was to encourage discipline in earning and spending money. The Marshal had made a famous remark about the years of war being over, and the day of work at hand. For the nation to be at work, and to be seriously engaged on saving something and spending the rest wisely was of more importance for the future of the state than any kind of political manœuvring. In this connection, the index of consumption of certain staples by the Polish people has a double interest. It tells of the rise and fall of well-being as such; and it gives the lie to those who argued that industry could only flourish in Poland on foreign markets. How far the public responded, both before and during the crisis, is well illustrated from these figures:

	Tobacco	Beer
1924		2,000,000 hectolitres
1928	647,000,000 zlotys	2,419,000 „
1929	705,000,000 „	2,620,000 „
	Sugar	
1924-5	260,000 tons (circa)	
1928	351,000 „	
1929	361,000 „	
1931	323,000 „	

In all these items the bad years brought a decided downward trend, but recovery reversed this, in some instances decidedly. By 1936 sugar consumption had passed the "all-high" of 1929, and has steadily risen, while meat had done the same already in 1935. Tobacco and beer, whose sale is a government monopoly, have not yet recovered, but many will not think of this as a misfortune.

For years the sugar situation in Poland was regarded as a sample of how things ought not to be done. In order to save the sugar-beet industry, and to retain for Poland a

share in the world markets, the price of that staple was kept at an absurdly high price at home—thus making what should have been a universal food into a luxury, while Polish sugar was sold in England at far below cost price. Thus the poorer people of the homeland paid a sort of tax on every kilogram of sugar consumed, in order that the foreign consumer might buy it at all! The producers had signs all over the country “Sugar builds up!”; and the wags added “English pigs”, the story being that it was being used as fodder abroad, instead of being available for human consumption at home.

But perhaps the best index of progress or decline in the national economy is the consumption of fuel, in particular of coal. This is necessary for home comfort, and still more for industrial expansion. Here the figures are as follows

1924	16,108,000 tons
1928	26,700,000 „
1929	31,500,000 „

The crisis hit this level very hard indeed. From 1932–34 the consumption hardly rose above 18,000,000; but by 1937 it was back to 25,000,000. Here the growing competition of water power is a factor to be reckoned with, but the endless resources of coal and the uses made of it in various forms, will always remain an instructive bit of evidence in all economic studies.

These details may seem unnecessary in this survey of events, but they show in plain fashion what the trends in the national life were. Just because the level of goods consumption per head in Poland is one of the lowest in Europe (even as the per caput income of the nation is among the smallest), the connection between economic soundness and political or cultural amelioration is closer than elsewhere. What means little to a wealthy country like France is fraught with the gravest danger for one whose material foundations are only being laid. For this reason, a significant fact in relation to all we have been saying is this, that even in the bad years the inborn thrift

of the Polish nation was not altogether broken. Savings Banks deposits continued to grow, of which details will be given elsewhere.

By way of celebrating the tenth anniversary of liberation, an International Exhibition was organised in Poznan, which was visited by millions from the country itself, and by hundreds of thousands of visitors from abroad. From this year began to be broken down for good the various kinds of barriers existing from pre-war days between the Prussian provinces and the rest of the nation. Paderewski came for a brief stay in order to unveil a statue of President Wilson by Borglum. Its opening in May 1929 had been preceded in November and December by various public functions, the atmosphere of which was one of deep gratitude for what had been done, together with confidence toward the future. Some twenty missions from abroad visited the exhibition, and not a few of these contacts made brought an improvement in trade relations with other lands. In the case of Roumania special steps were taken to develop the ancient communications between the Black Sea and the Baltic, but on fitting modern lines. A welcome event was the coming of the Mayor and Council of the near-by German city of Breslau on an official visit. This was returned by the Mayor and Council of Poznan in the autumn, after the Fair was over.

In the main, the relations of Poland with her neighbours and the standing enjoyed by the new commonwealth in the world at large improved with each successive year. This was due in good part to the wise guidance of the Foreign Office by August Zaleski (1926-1932), who never pretended that Poland could satisfy all the demands others might make on her, but who was never ruffled by passing tempests. One such, though not a serious one, had come in June 1927, when the Soviet envoy, Voikov, was shot on the station platform in Warsaw. The Foreign Office at once pointed out that it had not been done by a Pole; that offers of special protection to the envoy, in view of

his known unpopularity, had been rejected, and that as a result Moscow had no claims to establish. A second, and more serious one, arose at Geneva from the complaints sent in by the German Minority, in particular from Polish Silesia, about "terrorising" at election time. Coming on top of the famous dispute over the "German" children compelled to attend Polish schools, in which the Poles had been exonerated from blame, these complaints demanded only firm conduct in order to be met with success. It was noted that while Stresemann lost his temper, Zaleski remained cool; and the tendency of the German spokesmen to magnify trifles made the work easier. The same can be said with regard to repeated speeches made by German public leaders at points near the frontier, demanding "revision." Even the disputes that arose from time to time about conditions in Danzig never got out of hand.

It was a matter for satisfaction when Poland, simultaneously with the entrance of Germany into the League (which gave her a permanent seat on the Council), was awarded a three-year place on the same body. In 1929 came the news that Britain was ready to raise her legation in Warsaw to the status of an embassy, and would welcome the same for the Polish post in London. In this she was soon followed by the U.S.A., France and Italy. A good deal of sharp criticism appeared in the world press in 1930-31 because of the harsh way the Poles dealt with their Ukrainian Minority, or rather with unruly elements in it, which had for some time been carrying on an open campaign of sabotage—rick-burning and the like. To this we shall return in the sequel. Actually conditions on the whole eastern frontier had been getting steadily better; and Poland was able in 1932 to conclude a Pact of Non-Aggression with Soviet Russia (in the frame-work of the Briand-Kellogg plan), which has been regularly renewed since that time. The coming of the National Socialist regime in Germany was viewed with concern, but not by Pilsudski. He had waited for some time to get a man at the head of affairs in Berlin, with whom one could deal in the expecta-

tion that what he said would be accepted by the German nation. This seemed at last to be the case, and the difficult situation in which the Germans found themselves after they left the League in 1933 was exploited to the full. As all know, a Declaration of Non-aggression was signed by the neighbour Powers in January 1934, which gave Poland what Zaleski had tried in vain to secure, viz. the recognition of Poland's western boundaries. It took the world by surprise. Notably the French were not pleased by it, since it looked like a breach of their alliance with Poland. This has long since been seen not to be the case; and it will never be known what possibilities for trouble were averted in those years by Poland's firm stand.

Meantime important matters were being dealt with at home. A minor one, but significant none the less, was the securing of a French loan to make possible the completion of a much-needed direct railway line linking up the Silesian coal-fields with the new port of Gdynia. Part of this line had already been built, and its completion met a great national need. Of course, running as it does more or less parallel to the German frontier, it was branded at once by anti-Polish elements as a strategic move, as well as an economic one; but this could not be helped. In due course the whole line will be double-tracked; and it provides the means of getting the output of coal to the sea, until the cheaper, though longer water route via the Vistula will be completed.

In 1931 the second census was taken, after a ten years interval. The increase in population during the decade had been round five millions, though some of this is to be accounted for by the inclusion of Upper Silesia and the north-east. What startled all, and the process has gone on since, was the rapid rate of increase—one of the highest in Europe. Not only were more babies being born but fewer were dying in infancy, thanks to better hygienic conditions, and Poland was facing the threat of over-population of which more will be said below.

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There remained the solving of the constitutional question, to which the Marshal had addressed himself for some time; but which could not be effected without a two-thirds majority in the Diet. The first elaborated project was introduced in the Diet on February 22, 1929 by Colonel Slawek, Head of the Non-Party Block. Discussion showed that it had no chance of being accepted, so nothing was possible for the time being. Further efforts were made a year later, when various drafts were submitted, but the opposition of both the extreme Left and the Right blocked progress. In the summer of 1933 with the far stronger Non-Party Block, things looked more propitious. It was now that the specialist on the subject, Stanislas Car (pron. Tsar), put his own scheme for a new Constitution before the Non-Party Block, and that Slawek made his famous speech to the Legionaries, in which the notion of an elite of the nation electing the Senate was first propounded. Six months later the Sejm Commission adopted a draft of "Constitutional Theses", which the Opposition let go through, since it seemed to have no teeth in it. The debate on this fell on January 26, 1934, and was opened by Car in an impassioned speech. The Nationalists of the Right left the chamber during the discussion, declaring that it didn't interest them. The Left opposed it flatly, on the ground that it was only another plan for making permanent the Pilsudski regime; and the sitting was suspended early in the evening. On resumption a little later, the leaders of the Non-Party Block saw their chance. In the absence of the Right deputies, Car proposed that the Sejm should adopt the Theses as the draft of a New Constitution, and in the face of individual protests, the Speaker put the question. An almost unanimous vote followed, and the thing was done. The procedure was legal, though a trick had been played which recalled something not very different in the days of the 3rd of May, 1791. The Opposition were angry, but nothing was now required save the consent of the Senate. This was not obtained till the following January, and the New Constitution only came into force in April 1935. For better or for worse, the too liberal

basis of government had at last been changed into something more effectual, and only time would show how much of democratic principles had been sacrificed in the process.

Marshal Pilsudski could now feel that his work was done. It might have been a source of satisfaction for him to observe it in action, but this was not to be. Apart from and in addition to the services he had rendered to the national cause in pre-war days, and the great work done for the new state in its infant years, he had come back in 1926 to accomplish two mighty tasks. On the one hand he taught Poland's neighbours to respect her as a permanent factor in European affairs, and not as a "seasonal creation"; on the other he taught his own people the necessity of self-discipline, with a large dose of renunciation of personal and individual privileges and claims. Both these lessons had to be learned if Poland was to survive, and only Pilsudski had the prestige to carry this through. His personal example of complete unselfishness had helped enormously, and more than once fortune favoured him. His health had been poor for some time, and it was clear that he could not last long.

On May 2, 1930, France had signed the Pact of Mutual Assistance with the Soviets, and Laval was to visit Warsaw on his way to Moscow. When he arrived he was met at the station by Foreign Minister Beck, as the Marshal could not go out. Two days later the great man was gone.

The passing of so commanding a figure, and rather before his time—he was only sixty-seven, was bound to make some difference in Polish life. It would have been a far more serious blow, had he not taken such pains to prepare others to succeed him. No one could take his place, and no one could hope to enjoy his prestige with the masses; but there were those who could take the reins and keep the chariot of state from leaving the road. It was the fashion to say that Poland was now a dictatorship without a dictator. Those who like the formula can stick to it, but it again misrepresents the facts. The same authoritarian regime went on, at times more gently, at times less gently insisting on its being called to rule; the mind and spirit

of the Marshal being its guiding star. His own chosen men were in charge of key departments, and—after four years, they are still there. President Moscicki, one of the last of the group that worked together in the nineties, found himself with more responsibility, but he has not flinched from it. After an interim, Slawoj-Skladkowski, an army medical officer, who had risen to the rank of General, became Prime Minister; and his term of office, rather against his will, has already been the longest Poland has known. Public Finance is in the best possible hands—those of the architect of Gdynia, Eugene Kwiatkowski. The Foreign Office has been guided since 1932, on the lines laid down by the Marshal himself, by Joseph Beck, and with unquestioned coolness and skill. The important issue of agrarian reform has a tireless champion in Julius Poniatowski, the stormy petrel of the Cabinet, who gets bouquets from the Left and plenty of bombs from the groups of the Right. Finally, the vital matter of national defence is in the care of two of the Marshal's adjutants: General Kasprzycki as Minister of War, and General (since made Marshal) Rydz-Smigly as Inspector-General of the Forces.

On the latter has fallen the "mantle" of Pilsudski, in regard to the things he personally held dear. Rydz-Smigly is adviser to the President. He is the representative figure, who makes special visits or receives homage-bearing delegations, in order to save the President. He is the man who usually addresses the Legionaries at their annual gathering. A not too discreet decision of the Cabinet two years ago made him "the Second Citizen of the Republic!" But he carries his honours with a lightness that charms all who meet him. What is more, he has made more than one notable pronouncement in these years, which have not been easy ones for him. "They talk of dictatorship in Poland. The only dictator in Poland is love of country!" Elsewhere, at a moment of inner political tension, he used these words to the troops:

"If there is any engaging in political affairs, I shall do it, and not you!"

This from the typical soldier, who notoriously does not like all such controversies.

The story of the last four years in Poland is even more bound up with "the fitful fever" of Europe than the previous decade. Two things stand out, demanding attention above all others:

(i.) A resolute effort to consolidate recovery from the depression, and to strengthen the economic life of the nation, and

(ii.) a growing determination for "preparedness" to meet any and every threat, from whatever side, to the national independence.

With the former of these is connected the steady industrialisation of the country, and a great increase of urban population. With the latter are bound to be connected serious sacrifices by all, whether of property or personal comforts; but as things are in Europe at present there is felt to be no other way. *Sauve qui peut*—not by running away, but by standing to one's guns!

Out of the economic depression, and doubtless aggravated by the rising wave of nationalism, there have come objectionable symptoms of anti-Semitism—notably among the youth; and in general a move to reduce the extent of Jewish control in business and in industry. Thanks to the depression also, and by way of protest against authoritarianism in general, the opposition of the Peasant Party became for a time more articulate. The demand was outspoken that the veteran leader, Vincent Vitos, who had left Poland of his own free will in 1931, be "permitted" to return. From the Government side, as one of the major steps initiated, not only to dismiss the crisis but also to reinforce the national economy as such, a huge public enterprise was launched in 1935: the creation of a Central Industrial Region, lying roughly in the district of San-domierz, and between the Vistula and the foothills of the Carpathians. It was rightly felt that too much of Polish heavy industry lay on the western frontier, and exposed to

foreign attack. Each of these matters will receive special attention in later pages, and so may be left with only a mention here. They are all indications of a positive approach to living, rather than any sort of defeatism, or even of the tactics of Micawber. What is more, even those who criticize the administration on one ground and another, are solidly behind it in respect of national consolidation. Every one prefers deeds to words.

One thing deserves fuller discussion, viz.: the countenance of matters political. Already before the Marshal's death it was observed that the various groups—right, centre and left—were busily engaged in getting together the youth for purposes of political organization. For some time the Peasant Leaders had been forming various kinds of youth groups in the villages, the Endeks of the Right had begotten a National Radical Organisation, while the Non-Party Block was engaged in strengthening the ranks of the Legion of the Young. It was observable that none of these youth organisations had precisely the temper or colour of the older political parties, one difference being that they were Polish through and through, and another that they tended as a rule to more downrightness each in its own direction.

The Non-Party Block was of course still in control. In June 1935 it completed the work on the April constitution by passing new franchise laws. The age of voting was raised to 24, and a special electorate was created, numbering only 300,000 souls, to choose the Senate. The Diet was then dissolved, and the general election set for December. Thoroughly disliking the new regulations both Left and Right parties boycotted the whole proceedings. Only 47 per cent. of the privileged cast their votes, and the new Diet of 208 deputies (instead of 444) was a totally different instrument from the old. There was no Partyism in it at all, and it represented rather the occupational and professional groups of the nation. Of course organised Opposition was absent, but no one need think that, as a result, discussion of public issues has been lacking. In October a surprise came in the dissolving by their Leader

of the Non-Party Block. Slawek declared that during seven long years it had done most useful service, but that it was no longer needed.

Time was to show that this step, although well meant, might have ill effects rather than good. There were signs that the administration was not too sure of itself, e.g., in its handling of the riotings in the universities. The charges multiplied that it was not enough in touch with the country, and the dissolving of the organisation that had been its chief contact with the nation was not likely to improve this position. There was still much suffering from unemployment, and consequent unrest. The spring of 1936 brought strikes and disorder both in Cracow and in Lwow, and lives were lost in both cities. The economic situation was indeed slowly improving, thanks in part to extraordinary measures like the introduction of strict control over all foreign exchange, and the suspension of payments of interest on foreign debts.¹ The budget situation had been rehabilitated by Kwiatkowski and his colleagues, and the wages bill of the nation was higher. But the prices obtained for their produce by the farmers were still too low, and the pinch of want still reigned in the villages. Add to this the rising wave of disturbances in Europe as a whole, and one can see how severe the task was of those who were guiding the destinies of Poland.

In the autumn of 1936 it became known that a new political group was in the process of formation; presumably to succeed to the place of the Non-Party Block as the organisation of government supporters. It came into being as a National Unity Camp, and at once set about recruiting a representative membership. The response was good, but not nearly as enthusiastic as was hoped for. The leader, the one-time president of the Bank of Poland, Adam Koc (pron. Kots), made earnest efforts to approach the youth groups both of the Right and of the Left, but without signal success. The truth is, that he was not a born organiser,

¹ Further controls over national wealth were introduced in 1938, in the form of a strict register of all funds held abroad by Polish citizens. This has made possible the repatriation of much capital.

and cut rather a pathetic figure at a task like this by comparison with the miracle workers of Germany. In January 1938 he resigned, on grounds of ill-health, and his place was taken by a soldier. The Camp continues its work and with certain evidences of success; but since six months the threatening international horizon has forced all inner political activities into the background, and created a sort of truce.

Desirous of clearing the air the President suddenly dissolved the Diet in September 1938, and called for a general election. The ostensible reason was to get a new Legislature, which would alter the objectionable franchise laws. The Opposition Parties, through their very outspoken press, demanded a change in the latter before the election; otherwise they would again boycott the whole plan. This demand was not conceded, and the election took place in November. Something like a two-thirds vote—far higher than in 1935—was recorded; and a distinct victory was claimed for the administration. This claim was not unjustifiable, as any gains won by opposition groups were bound to be at the expense of one another, rather than a weakening of the government's forces. The simple truth was that whatever shortcomings might be charged up to the Cabinet, no other group or combination of groups is thinkable at the present in Poland, which could take over the guidance of affairs. Add to this the successes in Foreign Relations like the conciliation with Lithuania in March and the recovery of the Teschen area in October, and the chance of any large vote going against the government was slight indeed.

With a balanced budget, a reasonably normal balance of trade, an expanding industry and a certainty—barring elemental disturbances—of adequate food supplies, Poland can face the future with a good measure of assurance. Nothing is going to be easy, both because of vital internal problems still awaiting proper solution, and because of Poland's place on the map of Europe. With the Soviet philosophy and practice on one side, and the Nazi view of the world being translated into action on the other, the

people cannot be other than sensitive to currents and cross-currents of thought, as well as to threats of action. Both the nation and the government have declared themselves hostile to joining any ideological camp; they are as much against it as are Britishers. Yet there is one decision they have taken: as between Communism and Catholicism, they prefer the latter. For this reason most of the Polish press has supported Franco in Spain. The rise of this issue accounts for a noticeable veering off from tendencies toward Christian Communism that were making themselves felt a few years back inside the Polish Church. The same grounds are given for an onslaught, even in government circles, on everything savouring of Free Masonry. Extreme sensitiveness on the part of many Catholics is shown in school matters; a sample of this being the objections taken to the composition of the National Union of Elementary Teachers, or rather to its leadership, which was too openly Socialist. So too, although the Church has more than once denounced anti-Semitism, there is a growing dislike of dealings or associations with the Jews as a class. The new Poland is seeking its way, and before long we shall know better whither it is going.

CHAPTER VIII

RECONSTRUCTION AND CONSOLIDATION

THE restoration of social and political liberties was regarded by all Poles as a great vindication of justice. The majority looked upon it as the gift of Heaven, the more so as very few had dared to harbour the possibility when hostilities broke out in 1914. I never heard anyone say that it had been won by the power of their own right arm, though to-day there is a tendency to a change in this respect. What is more, only one Pole ever told me that he regarded what had taken place as a misfortune !

As was to be expected, masses of people at once leaped to the conclusion that everything which had been wrong would now be right, that everything that had been hard would now be easy. This superficial and facile judgment was doomed to speedy disillusionment, and it brought about in some cases a longing for the flesh-pots of Egypt again. There were even simple people who were heard to say, when the unheard-of frosts of the winter of 1929-30 killed all their fruit-trees, that nothing like that had ever happened under the Austrian over-lordship ! All who either thought for themselves, however, or had any experience of life to look back on, knew that nothing really worth while is handed to man as a gift on a silver platter ; and that, while Poland was now free on paper, little or nothing of blessedness would come of it all, save as men and women got to work to secure and improve their heritage.

The externals of a free Commonwealth—to use the ancient Polish term taken from the Latin *res publica*—were all to hand, though in a condition frightful to contemplate. There was the soil, God's greatest gift to men. There were

numerous improvements of a visible, mechanical sort; most of them rather primitive, it is true, and much below the level of modern standards. There was vast potential wealth in the form of natural resources, although a great deal of loss had been sustained thanks to the war. Finally, there was the huge reservoir of human material: millions of people knowing how to work and eager for the chance, who only longed for a return of law and order, so that their work might be fruitful. The task was to create such conditions as would bring these rewards of toil; and to waken again in the masses the faith in themselves and their future that would make this toil acceptable.

It must be admitted that the prospect faced in the spring of 1919—just twenty years ago as I write—was far from cheering. Of all lands only northern France and perhaps Serbia had been worse devastated than Poland. Over a million and a half of buildings had been destroyed, many of course of simple structure; but in addition the whole country had been stripped bare of literally everything that civilisation considers necessary. Soap was at a premium, even salt in many places. So scarce was tobacco that a package of cigarettes would purchase what money could not buy. No rubber gloves for hospital uses could be found anywhere, nor could compasses for the work of the class-room. I well remember how the university students in Warsaw crowded around me at the sight of my fountain pen!

More disturbing, in that it involved vast issues affecting the well-being of all, was the complete lack of liquid resources of any kind, of capital with which to do business. Economic life had been dislocated all over Europe by the war, but the new Polish Republic was worse off than most, and for this reason. It was constructed out of lands that lay on the periphery of Empires, and which under the old order looked to the central portions of those Empires, both for markets for their goods and for sources of needed materials or manufactures. War had tended to suck dry that periphery in the interests of the centre, so that for years millions of people were reduced to making the best shift possible with whatever was at hand.

Even these possibilities were restricted by the fact that the soil itself had been for years alternately neglected and abused. All possible strength had been taken from it, but nothing put back. In the same way live stock was exhausted—cattle, pigs, sheep and poultry; not to mention machinery and equipment of every sort. Nevertheless, the farms were to recover more quickly than what there was of industry. The textile centre of Lodzh, a city of half a million people when the war broke out, which imported its raw materials from distant lands, and exported to the vast expanse of "all the Russias", had been robbed literally of everything. Stores and machines of all kinds had been requisitioned by the invaders, the estimated loss to the city on that score alone being over £67,000,000. But that was not all. Their former markets were now gone, never to be recovered. The needful credits could not be had, and connections with the outside world were now cut off. To recover such things takes time, and the marvel is that Lodzh survived at all.

The general situation was desperate, but it had to be faced, whether in public or private relationships. Faced too by a people who, at least in regard to public affairs, had all too little experience. Nor did they flinch from the ordeal, and as eye-witnesses will agree, they accomplished surprising things. Mistakes were certainly made, entailing much suffering and not a little waste. But only those can pass a fair judgment on the achievements of the Polish nation during twenty years who look rather at what has been done, than at what, under ideal conditions, might have been; and who realise, at least in part, how little there was for anyone to work with.

Certain essentials had to be won as quickly as possible, if the new state was to be saved at all. One was popular confidence, another was national unity, a third was the finding of men and women to whom could be entrusted what we call the major public services. Shelter and food were needed for millions of cold and hungry people, and employment for as many as possible of the returned

soldiers and prisoners-of-war. The country was flooded with untold numbers of the latter, the one getting home from Russian, the other from German war-camps. The refugee problem alone would have baffled the boldest. Other matters were no less pressing. Communications in a modern state are what the arteries and veins are to the human body, and they have to be maintained and improved at all costs. As for the schools, most of which had served as hospitals or barracks for five years, and were in an unspeakable condition, they had to be restored to their proper uses in order that the half-demoralised children of town and country might once more begin to learn. Further, in the face of a catastrophic shortage of housing, notably in the larger cities, stern measures were necessary—some of them causing a real hardship to householders, to compel a sharing of such accommodations as were available.

One special word is in order here. It was impressive to see the number of Poles who kept turning up from every corner of the world in the immediate post-war years, bringing with them the savings of decades in order to help with the rehabilitation of "the old country". There were some, no doubt, who came back to look for a career, but these were not numerous. Many of the returned emigrants suffered serious losses, for they changed dollars into the prevailing marks or crowns then in use, only to see them disappear in the inflation. There was still another encouraging sign in this same field of human attitudes. In the days of the Polish kingdom there had been no titles—counts, princes and the like, of a social nature, but only political ones. The social kind were introduced by the three Empires, and became a sort of disease. After the war, with few exceptions, Polish gentlemen discarded them entirely, using visiting cards with their simple names and nothing else, thus returning to the national tradition. What is more, the majority of them offered themselves at once for work, wherever they were needed, ready to share the burden and the honour of "restoring paths to dwell in."

In facing a situation like that of the Poles in 1919, one may well ask the question, which should be put first:

spiritual and moral needs or those in regard to material things? At first sight the latter seemed more important, for the task of national consolidation could not be achieved until they were met. The lack of means to work with stood out like a sore thumb, demanding attention at once. Moreover, visible things are always easier to deal with than those of the mind and the spirit. We shall look for a moment at some of the most pressing.

The biggest single contribution of the nineteenth century to the externals of civilisation—has been the railways. Now, no Polish railways had been built to serve the people, but all to serve outsiders. That does not mean that the Poles did not profit from the use of them, but only that the three systems, German, Russian and Austrian, had no co-ordination with one another. (The Russian was mostly broad-gauge in any case, and had to be altered by the Germans during the occupation.) Each system faced its own capital, whereas the proper thing would have been for them to focus on Warsaw as the centre of the country. What is more, only the Prussian provinces could be said to have anything like an adequate net-work, the other extreme being the Russian. It would not be untrue to say that most of the lines had been built rather to serve the ends of military strategy than for the sake of the inhabitants. As a result there were no direct railways connecting Warsaw either with Poznan, or with Cracow, or with Lwow. Frontiers intervened, and made such lines undesirable. Imagine then the task faced by the Polish authorities, which was made much worse by the shocking condition of such remnants of rolling-stock as fell to their lot at the end of the war. The wonder is that services were maintained at all; and that, in spite of the war with the Soviets, the first two years saw much done to straighten out the tangle; so that by 1922 regular trains, both fast and slow, were running in and out of the capital in all directions of the compass, and linking it up with the remotest parts of the republic.

This was indispensable in order to meet a primary need of modern populations—the transporting of goods of all

kinds. In this matter, too, the post-war years were full of maladjustments. For a century the towns of southern Poland had looked to Vienna, not only as the arbiter of fashions, but as the source of scores of articles of daily use. Failing this, to the advanced industrial centres of Bohemia and Moravia. These sources were now cut off, and a wholly new set of orientations was necessary, as well as the establishing of new connections. Retail merchants were in despair, and the oddest complications resulted. When things finally got arranged, Poland had become a far more self-contained economic unit, in regard to all necessities of life, than is usually imagined.

Far older than railways are roads, and in the modern world they are coming into their own again. But they must be there to be used, and, save on her western borders, Poland has never had any. In this important respect then, the nation started at a grave disadvantage, one that will take a long time to remove. The reason is that roads cost so much to make, and Poland is dismally poor. A start was about to be made when the world crisis broke, and only since 1934 has the gigantic task been seriously taken in hand. Even so, I travelled into Warsaw in September 1936 over eighty miles of asphalt highway, in a country where such a thing was not dreamed of a generation ago ! All that could be done in post-war years was the patching-up of existing roads by the local authorities, to make the county town more accessible to the farmer. As the number of automobiles grows the demand for modern highways will be more insistent ; but the area is a vast one, and the task correspondingly great.

A few facts as to the progress made in the urgent matter of communications may not be out of place. One trunk line has been added to the railway system, to connect the Silesian coal-fields with the sea. Co-ordinating lines have brought direct service between the capital and Poznan, Cracow, and Sandomierz—which means the Central Industrial Area. Shorter local lines have either been completed, or are under construction, to make the marketing problem easier for the farmer and his wife.

But Poland has watched the advances being made in the west by motor traffic, and has made great strides in this direction, thus supplementing, but not supplanting, her railways. Coaches and buses have been brought in, which has given enormous improvements in mobility, but has also stimulated road-building. Nothing is more needed than this last, and both state and county authorities are giving it the fullest attention. Ten thousand miles of macadam have been added in ten years, an increase of over 30 per cent on what was. Some of this, notably in the west and around Warsaw, is cement highway.

A few years ago there were no decent motor-coaches or buses at all. Already in 1937 there was a mileage of 14,000 served in this way, almost the equal of the railway system. To-day it is much larger, and from personal experience I can say that it is the equal in equipment to that of the rest of Europe. The trouble is that, in places at least, there is still serious over-crowding. Add the fact that the number of private cars, in spite of the depression, was doubled between 1928 and 1938, and one sees that progress in road transport is very real.

A serious problem has been that of proper bridges. From the Middle Ages onward the scarcity and uncertainty of Polish bridges was proverbial: owing to the frequent floods, they might be here to-day, but gone to-morrow. This is now changed. In ten years—up to 1938—twenty miles of stable bridges had been built by the state, and double that amount by the local authorities. Not all of these are concrete, but they can be depended upon. In spite of this, the need is still enormous. Even the capital, a very big city, has only half the bridges it needs !

Two other modern means of travel should be noted—the motor coaches on the main railways, and the aeroplane. The former are of great service to business-men or others, travelling lightly, for they cut the time of the journey almost by half. As for the Polish air-service, it has long been a pride of the nation. Poland has seven aerodromes serving international connections, and a score more meeting the home needs. The latest addition to the foreign

connections has been a direct route to and from London. Daily flying on all home routes is regular, and as safe as any in Europe.

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Two institutions of paramount importance cried out for unification—the army and the whole fabric of the administration of justice. Of the two, the former was the more pressing, in that no kind of make-shift could be tolerated in the matter of national defence. It was easier to get on for the time being with the existing law-courts.

The reader already knows from what sources the Polish army had to be brought together; and a more motley collection of uniforms would be hard to imagine than that worn by the first regiments. To the Legionary formations came the Polish units rescued from the three imperial armies, and these were joined in the spring of 1919 by the Haller divisions from France. The formal unification, however, did not take place till the autumn; when the Poznanian troops were incorporated and a special Thanksgiving Mass was said in the cathedral in Cracow. Even then the real task had only begun, the details of which cannot be set forth here. Neither officers nor men had any common training or tradition. What is more, the Polish republic was not likely to perpetuate under the banner of the White Eagle the hated traditions and practices of the empires. It was doubtless an exaggeration to say that of old the principle followed was that “the stupider the soldier, the better!”, though this was the commonly accepted view. The citizen army, better said “the nation in arms”, now to be born was modelled rather on the French and Swiss; and it has remained to this day unequivocally an educational and public service institution, based on sound discipline but in keeping with the ideals of democracy. No one in Poland is brought up to think that the man in uniform, whatever his rank, is *ipso facto* something better than the civilian.

The charge has often been made that the Legionaries have come to play an undue part in the shaping and con-

trolling of the new army, and that they have succeeded to the highest positions. There is some truth in this, seeing that the Commander of the Legions was the architect of that force, and that he had many adjutants of university status with years of service behind them, whom he knew intimately and could trust. One thing is certain, that Pilsudski had a thankless task on his hands after the struggle with the Soviets was over, to clear away the throng of officers of all ranks and ages, whom Poland had inherited from the imperial armies, but who could not adapt themselves to the new conditions. Many of these were replaced by younger men, and an operation of this sort is bound to cause a certain amount of resentment. It has been justified by the results. For a decade, and especially since expansionist threats from without have made Poland's position uncertain, the army has been the pride of the whole nation, and it is likely to remain so. Its morale is unquestioned. It is Polish through and through; and by the will of its leaders it has been kept completely free from any party politics. In more ways than one it can be called one of the chief instruments in the unifying of the new state.

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For a number of reasons the co-ordination into a single whole of the legal and judicial systems obtaining on Polish soil in 1919 was bound to take much time and attention. At least four kinds of justice could be had in the different parts of the country. In the Prussian provinces there was one, in the Austrian another; in the one-time Congress Kingdom there was the Code Napoléon—a relict of the days of the Duchy of Warsaw—while in the Borderlands Russian law had prevailed for a century. Justice is in every land the same, but codes and procedures are many; and they can be based on quite diverse foundations. To take two simple examples: the laws of inheritance might make you secure in a legacy in one province but quite insecure in another; or, tell it not in Gath! you might be well and truly wedded in Poznanian, where civil marriages were valid, but far from it in southern Poland where they were not. In addition

there were all the complicated relations of State and Church, which vary in every country, and which provoke betimes unexpected anomalies.

There was only one thing to be done. Carry on with the existing codes for the time being, but get the best possible people to work with all speed on Commissions of various kinds, to study the problems involved, and with the least possible confusion to evolve a single, as far as possible, Polish legal structure. Only an expert can appreciate these things, and far be it from me to attempt to describe what has been done. Suffice to say that more than a decade of work was necessary before anything concrete was achieved, and that only recently have the final touches been put to the enterprise. The work has fallen chiefly on the men who at the same time have been training the rising generation of lawyers, and here, as elsewhere, time will do the rest.

But we must turn now to the things of the mind and the spirit, and see what sort of unification has been possible here. First, then, the question of confidence.

It need not surprise us, if a people on whom for generations had been impressed the fact of their subjection and the consequent inference of their inferiority as a race, should have almost come to lose that faith in themselves and in one another, without which normal living is impossible. The more so as three-quarters of those concerned were either peasants or workers in industry, who suffered from class as well as from national inhibitions. One of the best parables I have ever heard of what took place when liberation came, was put to his simple flock by a Polish Silesian pastor in those eventful October days in 1918, when the end was at hand.

"It is as if a great estate were suddenly taken from its high-born owners, and handed over to the workers in house and field, who until then had taken care of every part of it for their masters. Much of the place was in ruins, the manor pillaged and in part destroyed; the stables and barns in ill-repair, the livestock carried off, the fields neglected, the orchards and gardens grown up to weeds. Everything had to be put in order again, but as the new occupants wanted it. The biggest problem was that these latter had to learn how to use and enjoy their legacy.

There were books in the library, but they could not understand them, pictures still hanging, but they could not appreciate them, pianos in the parlours, but they could not play them. There was fine silverware, which they knew how to care for, and to lay out on the table; but they did not know which knife to take for the fish course, or which spoon to use for soup and which for dessert. Not only then had the property changed hands, but in so doing it brought a great challenge to those who were now its owners !”

The allegory has its defects, but it brought home to those hard-working peasants the essence of the great events that were happening all around them. It also made them see that, as things were changing, they must change too.

Few things would be more rewarding than to examine just why four generations of subjection did not do their work more thoroughly in Poland; in particular, what forces helped on the work and what militated against it. What was the role of the Church in all this, and what that of the Family? One thing cannot be denied. Millions of Poles remained “themselves”, though crippled in various ways, and morally disabled by the subterfuges they resorted to in order to save their souls. This made the transition from the old order to the new the easier. All the same, there were two respects, the one more serious than the other, in which the adjustment could not be easy. The one was the attitude of the governed to their government, the other the spirit with which Polish diplomats would meet the representative statesmen of the western nations.

Poles of pre-war days could only think of every government as “theirs” rather than “ours”. Even in Austria, since the provincial Diet in Lwow was too aristocratic a body to appreciate duly the mentality and needs of the masses. For this reason it became an axiom in Europe that, like the Irish, they were “agin the government”. Too many people could not at once throw off this accepted dogma, and even in their own country never came to feel that the government was “ours”. As noted already, much

of the opposition that troubled the early years of legislative and executive effort in the new republic, can be traced to this pre-war mentality. It has been greatly reduced since 1927, though Party differences are still acute; and this process should go on until the last trace of "Austrian" or "Russian" influence disappears. The younger generation are simply "Poles". Even then there will still be much to be done, for the essence of political life is the right kind of compromise, the readiness to give and take: and this needs learning. One thing is helping greatly in this regard. The rising generation is the first one in Poland that has ever played games in its youth—I mean team games. There is no better training for life than this; for those who have learned one day to win and the next day to be beaten without taking offence, will be far better fitted for public life than those who have never had such schooling.

One word as to the relations of Polish leaders in post-war days with the statesmen of other nations. It was unavoidable that the representatives of the new states at the Peace Conference should appear rather to ask favours than to negotiate. They had grave demands, and they had little or nothing to offer in return. But they should not have continued long to take that attitude, especially after the signal services Poland rendered to Europe by stopping the Bolshevik invasion in 1920. Nevertheless the first Polish leader to meet the French and the British Ministers at Geneva as an equal, and to act accordingly, was Alexander Skrzynski—at the end of 1924. From that time onward things began to take a turn for the better. Demanding respect, they got it; until they demanded it, they got nothing. Zaleski followed on precisely these lines, refusing to be intimidated either by friend or foe; and the way began to open for the notable successes Polish diplomacy has won in recent years. The final stage may be said to have been reached a decade after Skrzynski made the beginning when Poland announced in Geneva that she would no longer be bound by the Minorities Treaties unless they were to be made reciprocal, *i.e.*, effective in Germany, as well.

The need for a larger measure of national unity was in 1919, and still is, one of the first conditions of existence for Poland—as indeed for any country on earth. I have more than once likened the country and the people to a cake that has been cut into unequal parts; but a layer-cake, and with too little “jam” to hold it together. The pieces were the Partitions, the layers were the classes, while the adhesive material in the form of a middle class intelligentsia only began to be formed seriously a matter of sixty years ago. What is more, it could not hope to make itself really articulate under the class society system of the three Empires. It has only become really articulate in the new republic, and, though still woefully small in numbers, it is the power that welds together and saves the nation.

As in the case of confidence, so with unity, the problem is psychological. No stone was left unturned by the pre-war rulers of Poland, notably by Berlin and St. Petersburg, to sunder the Polish communities from one another, and to nurture among them every possible appearance of discord. Well-watched frontiers kept them apart. All-Polish gatherings of every kind were discouraged, including literary and scientific congresses. Even the scattered groups of Polish-Lutherans were not allowed to unite in a single communion. We saw how the last years of the old century brought the growth of a pro-Austrian orientation on the one hand, and a pro-Russian on the other. This antagonism, which was a purely political affair, was far less serious than something else. I mean the way in which the Poles living in each of the partitions, tended to absorb the general attitude prevailing around them toward the other Empires, and by consequence, toward their fellow Poles who lived there. As a result those of Poznan as a group had a very poor opinion of their compatriots beyond the Russian frontier, and this state of things made itself felt for a full decade after the emancipation. There were doubtless grounds for this view, but it did not help on the cause of national unification.

Neither did the reciprocal attitude of many Polish leaders in Russia toward their fellows in Prussia. Most of them

knew very little about them, but they came to regard the policy of economic self-help, which was thrust upon that group by Bismarck and Bulow, as almost a betrayal of the higher ideals of nationalism, and a descent into the realm of material aims or even an acceptance of the "pagan" theories of a Darwin. In the same way, the Poles of the Congress Kingdom, for the most part, looked down on their compatriots in the Austrian lands; again, no doubt, for what seemed to them good reasons. I have even heard distinguished Austrian Poles themselves say that not the easy-going Vienna regime was really the kindest to his nation, but rather the more brutal and ruthless Prussians and Russians. They, too, meant that the Hapsburgs tended to pamper his fellows and to lull them into an indifference in essential matters—the cosmopolitanism Szczepanowski had so roundly condemned at the turn of the century. It was the concurrence in this system, that the Poles in Russia viewed with alarm.

There is some truth in this view, but it is not all true. Many of the very finest Poles living to-day grew up under the Hapsburg domination. The one-time Austrian provinces gave to the new Poland more candidates for its civil service than the rest of the country put together. But that is not the point. What concerns us here, what was so hurtful, and could have been still more so, had it not been for the common heritage of language, literature and faith, for the common memory of past sufferings and the united hope of a better future, was the danger of serious rifts inside the structure of Polish thinking and believing. Something of this kind was to be feared, and did make itself felt, but here again time has done wonders. In the younger generation who have sat in Polish schools since 1919 there is no trace to be found of this vicious influence. One of them said to me in 1936, "We know nothing of all that, we know only Poland!" That is an immense step forward.

This is far from meaning, however, that all Poles think or act together, any more than do all Frenchmen. Unity does not mean uniformity, nor should it. There are still grave differences separating men and women from one

another, apart altogether from the political squabbling one hears too much about. As a sample of this let us take the peasants as a class. Those of Southern Poland were already organised in a political movement on class foundations before the war, and had become highly sensitive to the privileges of the ballot and to the claims of the taxpayer. Those of the one-time Prussian provinces were no less well organised, on both political and economic lines, but never as a class. They were an integral part of the national grouping which included gentry, townsmen, yeomen and crofters all alike. To this day they have remained virtually untouched by the party ambitions of the Popularist leaders. If now we turn to the far larger Russian provinces there is a wide variety of types. Save for the districts adjacent to the old Austrian frontiers, the villagers here were almost unawakened politically in pre-war days, and in many instances only knew that they were Poles because they attended a Catholic Church. Even to-day they are just beginning to take an intelligent interest in public questions. For these reasons, for which no one in particular is to blame, there can be no talk as yet of a national peasant front or of a larger Peasant Movement.

We shall come later to speak of the great differences in mentality and economic level of the common people in town and country along the Eastern borders from those of their compatriots in the West. This is due simply to the fact that the former see the product of generations of contact with the backward world of Russia, while the others had become in many ways quite the equals of their German neighbours. The former knew little or nothing about towns or cities or the amenities of civilization, the latter were in large part urbanised, in many cases identified with big industry, and in every case had been through the mill of the German elementary school.

There remains the matter of class distinctions which still exist in Poland on lines not far different from those to be found in the United Kingdom. In this field rapid changes are in progress, and the wise man will refrain from many

prophecies as to what may happen in coming years. What counts is this, that Poland is not ruled by any class, nor by the traditions of any class. The landed gentry, larger and smaller magnates, exist as a social group, but they are no longer in any splendid isolation as a whole. Moreover, they have been and are being sadly shorn of their great lands and their honours. The rising numbers of townsmen are only in the process of consolidating their position, in order to become the factor in public life that business men are in the west. The peasants are everywhere in the way of advancing their claims to attention, and of becoming perhaps the greatest power in the nation; but this end will not be achieved in a decade, and the peasants cannot achieve it without the collaboration of others. The growing class of industrial workers are too Catholic to be good socialists, but they are often too socialist to be good Catholics. The moral of all which is roughly this: that class distinctions are set for discard, the various groups being too much interlocked to quarrel successfully with one another, but too far from being united among themselves to be a serious threat to anyone. So much the better.

Although few could see it at the time, it was a blessing in disguise that the Poles were compelled to fight a major war against a dangerous enemy at the out-set of their existence as a free community: so that they came to know one another in the heat and turmoil of the struggle for existence, before they could waste their time and substance on internal differences. In the same way it was a blessing in disguise, when the Germans declined to renew the trade treaty of 1925, so that Polish industry in the west had nothing for it but to set about securing new markets all over their own country. Finally, although it seemed hard at the time, it was also a blessing in disguise that the new state was unable to borrow large sums of money abroad for the development of its natural resources; but had to learn the lesson of self-help, and to rely on the solidarity and thrift of its own people. All these experiences, though unpleasant, have made greatly for social and economic consolidation, and the new Poland is the stronger in consequence.

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CHAPTER IX

THE NEW COMMONWEALTH—I

Administration

THERE are two words in use, meaning the same thing to the masses, behind which the pictures are quite different. What may be called the old-world term, government, is meant to call to mind the steering of a ship. The term more used in the new world emphasises "doing for" a community. There guidance, here service.

Every state has its "centre" and its "circumference". From the one should go out two things: directives, and services. From the other comes in a sort of recompense for these, mostly in the form of rates and taxes. The surest hope of a settled and contented society is that the balance of these things should be fair; that the exchange be recognised by the largest possible number of people concerned. To use the simplest parable: the parts of the machine will function if it is fuelled; they will not squeak if it is well oiled.

It need surprise no one, if the Poles, who had watched the working of democratic institutions along the Atlantic seaboard during the nineteenth century, while they themselves were subjected to varying degrees of absolutism, thought more about liberties when the hour of emancipation came, than they did about discipline. They had experienced more than enough of government—at the hands of others, and would have welcomed a spell of complete freedom from all restraints, had this been possible. Of course it was not. The lack of efficient administration in the eighteenth century had brought them into servitude, and the chance dare not be taken again. More than ever

it was true now that the fit survive, and this means groups as well as individuals. Fitness, however, means having oneself in hand; and compels strict attention to the things that unite rather than those which divide.

In organising the new state fabric, the chief concern of the national leaders was to avoid over-centralisation. It would have been relatively easy to reproduce the Russian or Austrian system, with Warsaw as the centre of a hierarchy of bureaucrats, whose higher and lower ranks of helpers would be found in every part of the country. The latter would be only routine workers, having no power to make decisions, even to the repairing of a bridge or the engaging of a messenger-boy, and no funds at their disposal for carrying them out. If one adds the old practice of never taking action on the least matter, unless it was all set out in a Memorandum, the result would be a fair parallel to the one-time Austrian system.

Many considerations argued for such centralisation, and in some respects it was actually introduced. Far too many trivial decisions had to be taken in Warsaw in post-war years by high officials in the Ministries, and the results were not happy. No doubt it was desirable that anyone needing a passport to go abroad should come to the capital and spend three days going from one dignitary to another, before he got it. But it was certainly not a good thing, if a farmer, with a chance to sell to advantage a stand of timber, had to leave his sowing or reaping and appear in person in a number of official quarters before the permission would be given. Nor was it a good thing that the building of a school, or the granting of a licence to open a tavern, should have to be settled in a Ministerial councillor's room hundreds of miles away. It is fair to say that, as soon as the nuisance of this kind of thing became evident, efforts began at once to alter it; and that the practice of settling as many routine matters as possible on the spot and everywhere with the help of the telephone was made the subject of an official injunction to all members of the civil services. Thus was checked what might easily become a Moloch of red-tape.

Decentralisation, which would give a wide range of decisions into the hands of the provincial or local authorities, was beset by various complications. Different regions of the country required different treatment. It would not have been hard to formulate rules for an almost homogeneous population, but it was another matter to do this in districts where national minorities were so strong as to be a "majority". Further, it was one thing to arrange the details of self-government in highly intelligent communities, like those of the one-time Prussian lands; but something very different to do this for the counties east of the Bug, two-thirds of whose inhabitants were illiterate. Finally, the kind of self-government that could serve admirably the needs of a rural district, would be quite unsuitable in a densely populated industrial area like Silesia.

From this the obvious conclusions:

(i) That in many parts of the commonwealth the existing machinery, with but slight changes, could be left to carry on; the more so as in both the Prussian and Austrian communities, the work had been done for years by patriots and in the Polish spirit. Watched by their neighbour Germans and Czechs, they felt the responsibility on them for doing their work well.

(ii) That any effort to create universal regulations, to be applied as they stood, would mean the courting of trouble.

(iii) That a study of existing conditions, and a certain measure of experimentation were advisable, before the adoption of any system could be entertained. This would take time, and perhaps a good deal of patience with interim efforts; it might even mean a taking of certain risks.

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There were two other problems to be faced in this connection; one of them universal, the other peculiar to the country itself. The first was that of personnel. Even to perform routine duties, men and women must have a reasonable dose of honesty and a sense of social responsibility; and if they are to be more than just cogs in the

machine they must have some ability, and have gone through a course of schooling. There is no land in Europe that has a surplus of such people; and Poland would have been a strange exception if she could have commanded them after a century of serving others and five years of war. Responsible leaders knew this, and were always coming back to the same bogey; we could do anything if we only had the people!

The other difficulty was of a different sort. In many rural communities, to say nothing of the towns and cities, the rivalries of political groups had been for years rather acute. It was hardly to be hoped that these rivalries could be kept out of sight when issues of local government were under consideration. First, there were desirable "posts" to be had, some of them quite well paid: and whose possession would enhance the prestige of the party. But the second difficulty was worse still, viz., the direct clash of group interests and philosophies of life. In a rural community between the landless workers and the owners of the estates, in many towns and cities between the workers and the industrialists. In other places, it took the form of a struggle between cultural groups—Poles and Jews, Poles and Germans, or, as in the whole south-eastern area, between Poles and Ukrainians.

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The main lines on which the new Poland has moved to meet these issues, can be stated fairly simply. But it should be remembered that by no means all of this organisation is effective even to-day, and the stages of its realisation vary according to the province. The commonwealth is divided into seventeen provinces (*vojevodeships*), each of them with a resident governor. One of these, Polish Silesia, has its own Diet and its own Budget (from which a proportion is paid into the National Treasury in Warsaw). The provinces fall into counties (*powiaty*), each with an appointed prefect at its head, the *starosta*. Both the Governors and the Prefects have their advisory Councils, elected by various bodies. The western provinces, the

existing and very efficient municipal government has been retained, along side of the higher administrative officials introduced by the central authorities. The country is composed of municipal units—rural and urban; the former to be known as *gromady*. These are in turn made up of communes *gminy*, which are thus the ultimate cells of the structure. These *gromady* did not exist of old in the Prussian and Austrian provinces, and their introduction is part of an effort to arrive at a measure of uniformity throughout the new state. In charge of the *gromada* is a paid reeve (*soltys*), while each *gmina* has its *wojt*—a village mayor, usually a senior householder with property. For his support is a local council, elected by the villagers. The presence of the reeve, who gives all his time to local administration, is commended as a way of getting a better system than the old voluntary one; for the cost of having a paid “manager” in every *gmina* would be excessive. This reorganisation is still going on, and has met with some opposition. The slow-moving mind of the peasant makes him loth to go to anyone outside his own community, in order to transact business.

One important fact should be noted here. The towns and cities have not flourished under local control by mayor and council. Often enough, thanks to the war, the treasury was depleted, and help had to be demanded from without. There were even cases of serious mismanagement. In such cases, the Home Office has put in Commissioners to handle this situation, and mostly with good results. There are cities where for years the functioning of Councils has been in abeyance, and no elections held. Again to the annoyance of the local politicians, who often had Party axes to grind! The inhabitants have profited from this plan, for they always prefer deeds to words. In both Warsaw and Lodzh the record of the Commissioners has been a distinguished one. Yet there has never been any intention to make this sort of thing permanent. After the local government elections of last autumn, a return was made in many instances to the regular control by Mayor and Council.

As in the United Kingdom, so in Poland, the desire reigns as far as may be to place the responsibilities of local administration on the shoulders of the people on the spot. Exceptions are only made, in principle, in frontier districts. This is held to be a sounder method than the bringing in of strangers from outside. There may be risks connected with it, but the long range gains are unquestioned. Pride of community achievement becomes an integral part of national patriotism. The unity in diversity thus won is a far more wholesome thing than any attempt at an ordered, and often seeming uniformity.

Of course the problems of local self-government, which have not been fully solved in many countries of the world, are far from completely met in Poland as yet. Nevertheless a good beginning has been made, and the experiences of twenty years have been most useful. As the schools continue to do their work, and in time the last traces of regional differences disappear, a host of minor sources of friction will go with them; and something like an efficient instrument of local controls will emerge. Nothing can be permanently acceptable which does not take account both of the local needs, and of the demands of the nation as a whole.

Security

We turn now to the agencies for maintaining the social order and securing it against trouble-makers—the Police and the Law-Courts. Behind both stands the army, as the guarantor of peace, and of settled conditions of national existence.

Nothing had become more distasteful to the subject peoples of Eastern and Central Europe than the old-time “gendarmerie”. The resolve of the Polish commonwealth was not to copy it, but to constitute its own agencies for order and safety on quite other lines. The English system was made the model so far as possible, and delegates from London were invited for a year to lay foundations. Out of the various local constabularies, created *ad hoc* in the troubled post-war period, there was gradually formed a

National Police Force. A Police Act was passed in July 1919 by the Diet, and by the end of 1920 something tangible had taken shape. The key-note of the force was rather to prevent crime than to assist in putting it down. A single type of uniform, and a sound military discipline were introduced. The Chief Commissioner in Warsaw was made responsible to the Home Office. A Central Training Institute was created in the capital and special schools for the same purpose founded in various parts of the country.

Special corps were singled out for frontier duty, notably the K.O.P. for special work of the eastern Borders; whose contribution has been a signal one, not only in maintaining law and order, but in furthering cultural interests in many an isolated district. The General Force numbers tens of thousands, and from personal observation I can say that its relations with the populace have been uniformly friendly. Criticism has not been lacking at times for what has been held to be unnecessary sharpness in using force; notably in dealing with the peasant rioting of 1937. Such things are the fault rather of those in high places than of the men. The police are regarded by all as the guardians of property and safety, and the pre-war antagonisms are gone forever.

The administration of justice is at last a more or less unified whole. The Courts form a hierarchy as in other countries, the lowest grade being those presided over by Justices of Peace in rural communities, and Urban Judges in the towns. Special provision is made for criminal offences. Above these are the District Courts, attached to which are special tribunals for juveniles. In the District Court juries may be used, notably for criminal cases, but the usual thing is a senior judge as chairman, with two assessors. Next come the Courts of Appeal, of which there are eight; situated in the main centres of population. Finally there is the Supreme Court in Warsaw. Of this there are three Chambers: one for criminal offences for the whole nation; one for civil cases serving Central Poland, and one for the one-time Prussian and Austrian provinces.

The training in theory and practice for posts on the bench is a thorough one, the qualifications exacting. While

not pretending to the rather undue severity of pre-war days, the Polish courts have won a reputation for soundness, and like the police, they are kept free of political bias. There are cases on record of signal justice done to citizens belonging to the Minorities, though the charge has been brought of discrimination. The special care of guarding the Constitution is in the hands of Public Prosecutors, attached to all three upper ranks of Courts. Severe verdicts have been handed down against Poles found guilty of treasonable practices, while others have been held to be too lenient.¹

As for the army, its creation and maintenance have always been considered a matter of prime importance. The general muster of ancient days is too uncertain a quantity for modern requirements; on the other hand a professional army is too costly a business for a poor country. A resort was had to the principle of a "nation in arms". The nucleus of this is a standing force of 260,000 men, whose training and equipment are the best that can be found. Of this force the task is a two-fold one:

(i). That of being at all times in a state of readiness to meet any sudden danger, and

(ii). that of schooling the citizen body, which is taken for service at the age of twenty-one. The yearly contingent is on the average 300,000 men, from every class and province in the land.

The officers in the regular army number 18,000, to which comes a far larger quota of "reserve-officers". The N.C.O.s are double that number. The air force has regularly numbered about 8,000, and there is about the same quota of marines. Each division has its own artillery, its sappers, and its air squadron. The total air armament is not known, but its quality is of the best. Polish airmen have won, in open contest, the respect of the continent. They belong to the most daring in Europe. What is more, the system of air-raid precautions has been maturing for years, and can be said to be as adequate as the available means can make

¹ There is one Concentration Camp in Poland, at Bereza in the Marshlands. Formerly used for political prisoners, it is now reserved rather for special cases of hardened criminals, or for profiteers. All those sent there are reported in the daily press !

it. On the score of machine-gun equipment Poland is said to be still below the desired level of modern requirements, but the condition of things is probably better than is assumed. Cavalry have not been regarded in our day as a vital part of military strategy to the extent they used to be; but the Polish cavalry are the pride of the nation. In view of the open country and the scarcity of good roads, they might well play a part in keeping with the age-long traditions of the Polish hussars. The whole national army is intended for purposes of defence alone, and it can be trusted to give a good account of itself. Whether Poland occupies the fifth place as a military power in Europe or not need not detain us here. Comparisons are of little value; only the actual testing can tell the story. While hoping that such a time will not come, and regretting that so much money has gone for what many hold to be unproductive purposes, one cannot but admire the resolve of a people who are set between larger neighbours, and know that in the last analysis only force can guarantee their independence.

Politics

Unswerving advocates of democracy as we all are, we cannot deny the fact that it is at best a great adventure and one on which the unfit enter at their peril. Only those are advised to try it out, who are prepared to take risks. On the other hand, nothing can fit people for the exercise of a ballot and the sharing in government, save the experiment itself.

The conditions and atmosphere of the post-war world have not been favourable to this kind of experimentation. A people like the Poles, while deeply desiring all the liberties of speech, of the press and of public discussion, associated with free institutions, have been driven to see that these things are not the only life values. To put it better, they have recognized the fact that one might better sacrifice a measure of these liberties, than take the risk of losing larger things, with the cancelling of the latter to boot.

The March Constitution of 1921, worked out in the great tradition of Locke, Rousseau and Jefferson, started off by declaring that the Polish State was a Republic. The April Constitution in 1935 has this phrase instead: The Polish State is the *bonum commune* of all its citizens ! The earlier one went on to say that the sovereign power was vested in the nation; the latter declares in Article 2 that "the one and indivisible authority in the state" is vested in the person of the President. These differences are significant. If a layman in such things may venture a comment, I should say that in the former the emphasis is on the fellowship of citizens (*civitas*) of which each one is a member: while in the latter the emphasis is on the Commonwealth or weal—we have no other word for the Latin *res publica*, of which each citizen is a shareholder. In the last analysis it doubtless comes to the same thing, but the difference of emphasis remains.

There is more in all this than the putting of the claims of the individual first in the one case, and the claims of the group first in the other. The fellowship may be dissolved without the particular member being vitally affected. The shareholder has nothing left, when the thing shared is gone. Some would hold that this view the extreme of which is Fascism is tantamount to the materialisation of life. This would go too far, for the *bonum commune* includes more than man's visible heritage. To it belong the treasures of the mind and spirit as well, of which we are all sharers according to our capacity.

The change in Poland from a too liberal basis for the common life, to the one which many have denounced as reactionary, is justified by its advocates on grounds of its political realism. The reader will discern at once an echo of the old battle between the Romanticists and their adversaries, but with this difference. The revolutionaries of pre-liberation times have become the realists, once that goal was achieved. The question is, why ?

One evident reason is that the revolutionary element, who stood for direct action as a means of restoring the Commonwealth, continued to call for action; and were

soon impatient of, not to say exasperated by the spectacle of parliamentary life in Warsaw. There is a Polish proverb which says: When the woods are on fire, it is no time to go picking roses! Precisely this situation was faced by the nation in 1919-20, yet the worthy deputies went blithely on with their deliberations, most of which got nowhere. Not only were many of them wholly inexperienced in public affairs, but the majority were tied hand and foot by the bonds of Partyism. There were present in the first Diet the left-overs from three Imperial houses of Parliament, from the Prussian Landtag and from the provincial Diet for Galicia, which had met in Lwow. Though their tongues were Polish, each group spoke a different language. What is more, almost everyone had its sectional or class interests dearer to it than the Commonwealth. Finally, although there was an interim president in the person of the Chief of State, he had no place in legislative action. All the Diet had to do was to vote something, and get the Speaker to sign it. Then it became law.

It might be supposed that the lack of respect shown by those who had fought for years to help the nation to freedom, was only the natural aversion of the soldier to civilian discussions. But there were many others than Pilsudski and his associates, who saw clearly the risks being taken. It was not that they objected to Parliament in itself, for they had a wholesome respect for the principles of self-government. Nothing was more important, than that the new state should have its Diet, and only by experience could that body learn its task of legislation. But no such Diet had any claim to absolute powers. Alongside it there was needed a Cabinet of competent men, with a wide measure of authority, responsible to the nation, but not ham-strung when action was needed, nor reduced to futility by the caprices of party leaders. Such a Diet could be a most useful place for the airing of opinions and grievances, and it could become a fine school for the training of political leaders. But the course of events was not likely to wait till this training could be completed.

In the first Diet, in which the Minorities were not

represented, all the party groupings could be found that were to play an undignified part in public life for the next ten years. If they had been able to march together, the peasants could have elected a majority in the House, but of such unity there could be no mention. As a class group they elected about one quarter of the deputies, but split up into various sections. The Moderates, known as the Piast Party were eighty-odd in number, coming mostly from Galicia, and they were under the leadership of Vitos. Alongside were the Liberation Party, a much more radical group, mostly from the Congress Kingdom. Two groups represented Labour. They were the Socialists who had 35 deputies, and the National Labour Party with 29.

Over against these stood the National Democrats, who challenged the patriotism of all the others, and put their antagonism to all Minority claims in the forefront of their programme. Not even they could offer a united front, but were composed of three groups. There were the National Populists, with Dmowski as leader, numbering about 80; the National Populist Federation with a slightly smaller following, and the Christian Democrats (Catholics) with 30 deputies. In describing them the veteran historian Bobrzynski says that what kept these groups apart were the personal ambitions of the leaders more than anything else. Finally, there was a tiny group of about a dozen members, of Conservatives from Eastern Galicia, who shared some of the views but hated the methods of the Endeks. In such a motley gathering, not only was no working majority possible, but by no combination of parties could a lasting majority be created.

The result was a mixture of comedy and tragedy. In effect it was chaos, where order and efficiency were badly needed. Only in one respect did the parties seem to agree. They would not allow any government to function in normal fashion, unless they were its directors. A succession of shufflings and changes followed, which boded ill for the future. Had Paderewski, as Prime Minister, been a man of iron as well as of silk, had he been more experienced in such things so as to realise promptly the dangers, his

personal prestige combined with the influence of the Chief of the State, could have compelled obedience and attention. But he was not. One thing characterised his dealings above all others—what the French call *bonté*. Under such conditions, however, and in dealing with such people, much sterner qualities were necessary. One thing alone saved the situation, the sound instinct of the nation as a whole, wherever party politics were not in question; and its readiness to follow the man whose record for twenty-five years had been one of active and unselfish devotion to the cause of freedom.

Two years of negotiation, much of it sterile, were necessary, before anything could be produced that might serve as a Constitution. Wild projects were considered and rejected, from royalist and ecclesiastical on the one hand, to others that amounted to Communism. We have already seen what the upshot was, something colourless rather than bad; and only useless because the people and the conditions were lacking that could have made it effective. Poland needed a political debating society, but she could not afford to call it a parliament. The plan of a two-chamber system, with a responsible Cabinet of Ministers, was good: but only on condition that a working majority was available, so that yearly budgets could be enacted, taxation enforced, and an approach to continuity assured in home and foreign policy. Seeing that none of these things was possible, Pilsudski refused to become President, and retired from public life. He left behind him—to all intents and purposes, a blank. Only when economic ruin stared them in the face could Grabski get the deputies to invest him with the necessary powers to reform and establish the currency. His account of the struggles it cost him and the obstacles put in his way by various people, is a revealing one.

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From this it is easy to see why the turn-over of May 1926, however it appeared to outsiders, was the one way of salvation. A British journalist put it quaintly, that the problem of Poland from 1922 onward, was the unemployment of

Pilsudski ! The latter had not been wholly indifferent, but from his modest country home had more than once intervened, especially where some threat was offered to his pet concern—the army. When he finally took matters into his own hands, it was soon clear that he was fulfilling the latent wish of the great mass of the nation.

Space does not permit of a closer analysis than the sketch already given of the nine years of his control. Had anyone else appeared, no matter from what party, who could have faced the spectres hovering around, and laid them, it seems certain that he would have given him loyal support. But neither Dmowski, who proved to be oddly sterile of constructive ideas and unfit for positive action in post-war years, nor the peasant leader Vitos, nor that blameless knight of socialism Daszynski, could command general confidences to say nothing of the Silesian leader Korfanty, or less known seekers of office.

As we have said, the Marshal was no advocate of absolutism in national life: he had fought it all his days. Nor was he an enemy of democracy, though he knew full well its limitations. He could have set himself up as a dictator-for-life, as others in Europe were doing it, but he would not. For him government with the consent of the governed was the highest political ideal: but he knew that one cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Nothing disturbed him more than sham, and his tremendous passion for his country made him ready to take the gravest risks. It was characteristic of him that he cared little for what passed for public opinion, but was in reality only its shadow. The strong language he used at times was not pleasant to listen to, but it usually told the truth. His sense of humour, which delighted in the caricatures made of him, and permitted honest men to make jokes about him to his face, kept him from personal reprisals of any kind. He was willing to work with people of any Party, so long as they put the cause of the nation above the group. Only then did he break with others, or resolve to come down on them hard, when he was sure that they were hurting the cause of Poland. Recognising this, many who had distrusted him

in earlier times—notably the leaders of the Catholic Church, seeing that his Socialism was not Marxism, came to be his staunchest supporters. It is a fair guess that the verdict of history, though it will reveal his limitations and find fault with things he did, will be on his side rather than on that of his opponents.

For the feature of the April Constitution of 1935 which has been the stone of stumbling to the majority of the nation, Pilsudski was not responsible. He doubtless believed in an élite, in the virtues of aristocracy—in the root sense of that word; and had little faith in democracy, especially when *demos* is incompetent and undisciplined. But it is a mistake to charge him with any inclination to totalitarianism. It can even be demonstrated that his work, more than that of all others, has kept Poland from that pit-fall. All totalitarianism is at best a dangerous short-cut, at the worst an abyss of incompatibilities into which not men of courage but only cowards will fall. Although prophecy is never safe, it may be predicted that his country will escape that danger, and arrive at a far saner solution of its problems. As the Economist of August 6, 1938 put it well:

“It need hardly be doubted that, given another ten years of peace, Poland will gradually return to more democratic forms of government—probably somewhere between the extreme liberalism of 1920–26 and the “directed democracy” which was Pilsudski’s aim. Time may well show that the agonies and disunity (even within the governing regime), of the last three years, were merely the birth-pains of a new order which will evolve gradually. . . . Both President Moscicki and Marshal Smigly-Ridz, during recent weeks, have disavowed any ideas about totalitarianism: nor was it, indeed, ever seriously thought that they would countenance such ideas in others.”

Nine months have passed since the above was printed, but it stands to-day just as it did then. An emergency dictatorship is always a possibility, but there will be nothing more. When the retirement of the veteran President comes next year, it is only a question as to who, out of a number of acceptable candidates, will take his place. No radical

change of tendency is to be expected, nor would anything of the kind be agreeable to the nation. Not for nothing did Poland cling to an excess of free institutions in other times, when her neighbours were reactionaries. The national tradition in this respect is unbelievably strong. What one hopes is that moral support for this tradition will not be lacking in the outside world. For Poland to go down before the forces of any kind of absolutism would be an international disaster.

The Peasant Movement

A few paragraphs should be added on a subject that has been much talked and written about—the rôle of the peasants in the new Polish state. Here, as in various other matters, a great deal of nonsense is heard, and from people who do not know the facts.

Among the essentials to be kept in mind are, first, those already noted in Chapter V. In three quarters of the country the present generation of children are the first ever to be in school. No political structure worth having can be founded on illiteracy.

Second, the need for what does exist of a political organisation to be united in its ranks. This has never yet been possible. Inside what can only be called a group of Parties are elements strongly Left, stolidly Centre, and resolutely Right. This is perfectly natural, but it means that years of work are needed before the conditions are achieved that can make possible a Peasant Front.

Third, during the interim, the one hope of exerting a real influence in politics, is for the peasants to come to an understanding with other Opposition groups. Of this there are two possibilities, the Socialists of the Left and the Nationalists of the Right. With neither of these is any lasting alliance feasible. The peasant is an individualist (unless tormented by hunger), and a Christian: Socialism is his pet aversion. As for the Right, it represents chiefly Endek traditions, which he does not like, and has a good measure of landlordism, which he has always condemned. Without

some such alliance, however, no short cut to power is possible.

Fourth, while it is doubtless true that many Peasant Party leaders demand above all a share in the political life of their country, the vote of the masses is determined very largely by economic conditions. The farmer wants one thing—the land. Knowing this, the present government is firmly behind Poniatowski's vigorous campaign for parcelations, and it has a good deal of peasant support as a result. The farmers are getting the land, right now; and not even a Peasant Government can create more than there is. More than that, the programme for industrialisation being pushed forward by Kwiatkowski is seen by all to be the needful complement to the other. In other words it offers a great hope of meeting in a few years the worst cases of misery in the countryside.

As this process goes on, a new situation will arise. In Poland as elsewhere industrialisation means urbanisation. The lines that have distinguished town and country are already disappearing. The towns are spreading out into the open spaces, the country is being brought nearer to the amenities of the town. Good roads, telephones, the wireless and the cinema, existing to-day where they were unknown before, are transforming the mentality of all. The present era is that of the bicycle, the next will be that of the automobile. Class and regional differences disappear. Isolation will give way to mobility, social distances will vanish along with physical.

These remarks should not be taken to mean either that the Peasants are not a power, or that the writer is in no sympathy with their aspirations. A farmer's son from the Canadian west is not likely to minimise the rights of primary producers: those tillers of the soil, who make all well-being and civilisation possible. But he knows from experience—gained in two continents, how slow the farmer is to move, how hard he is to organise; and how unready he is to accept the leading of educated men and women, even of his own sons. Only such leadership, however, can meet the needs of the case.

In August 1936 I had the privilege of being present at a monster Peasant political meeting in the foothills of the Carpathians and such an experience is not soon forgotten. If and when that kind of thing can be made general all over Poland, a great step will have been accomplished toward the forging of the nation. The farms supply most of the defenders of the country; they will and should supply most of its voters. But these voters must be informed, not ignorant; otherwise demagogy will ensue, not democracy. And they must think in terms of the whole, not of one part.

CHAPTER X

THE NEW COMMONWEALTH—II

The A.B.C. of Poland

POLITICAL frontiers can mean much or little. They can be a sign of essential differences, coming far out of the past and going deep into the *mores* of peoples; or they can be something very like accidents, at times iniquitous. Those between Belgium and France, or between Canada and the U.S.A., or the line separating the South German peoples from Austria before 1914, were of the arbitrary rather than the functional type. Where political frontiers coincide with cultural, they have vital significance. This case, however, they are mostly belts rather than well-defined lines on the map.

As a rule, though not always, they have been provided in part by Mother Nature. Seas, deserts, great forests or mountain ranges are examples of this provision. Rivers less, since for the most part the same kind of people live on one bank as on the other. Even here, as Hilaire Belloc has again been reminding us, they are loose rather than exact "divides". Not even the wall of the Pyrenees represents a simple and precise limit to either side.

Until 1914 Poland had for a century been cut to pieces by political boundaries, which were purely arbitrary. They ran through solidly Polish lands, from north to south and from east to west. We have seen that, in spite of all precautions and efforts to make them "divides" they were never really operative. Nevertheless, in the economic field, in an age when development in visible and material things went on at a pace unknown before, they did make

themselves felt, and the eyes of the traveller had little difficulty in discerning them. One of the best proofs of the undoubted progress made by the nation since 1919 is that to-day, few traces of them are left.

German Silesians were never tired of pointing to the striking contrast between the Industrial Triangle their money and organising capacities had created during the nineteenth century with Gleiwitz, Beuthen and Katowice as its chief centres, and the neighbouring region of heavy industries just over the Russian boundary—Sosnowiec, Dabrowa, etc. In the one good roads, rail and tram communications, electric lighting, water-works, schools, banks and a reasonably good grade of housing for the workers: in the other few roads and poor, scant provisions for transport of men and goods, fewer banks, almost no schools, and in general a picture of dirt and untidiness, whether within or without the homes of the miners and foundrymen. This was all true, as I can vouch from personal observation. Yet when I asked a friend the other day, how things were getting on in the one-time Russian district, his answer was immediate: "Why, Sosnowiec is to-day almost more attractive than Katowice!"

In July of last year, I travelled for the first time from Poznan to Warsaw, over the new, direct route. It took just five hours, whereas fifteen years ago we were glad to get there in eleven. But what interested me most was to see whether the old-time dividing-line between Prussian and Russian provinces could still be recognised; and I had to admit that it could not. Everyone brought up in the country can tell at a glance whether a farm is well-run or not. The outward appearance betrays the mind and will of the owner. The state of repairs of buildings and fences, the marks of tidiness and order, the care of machinery, not to mention the homes themselves or the conditions of field and orchard, are decisive in revealing good or bad husbandry. Formerly the "German" areas were marked by well-built homes of brick, with tiled roofing for the most part; by gardens and farm-yards in good condition, by robust crops and sleek cattle, and—on all save the smallest

holdings, by the presence of modern implements. Across the frontier were mostly log cottages with thatched roofs, smaller gardens without much colour, poorer crops, less imposing herds, and—save on the larger farms, a minimum of machinery. As one approached the Vistula, this condition of things was even more in evidence.

To-day the dividing line between west and east is gone. Not that the second half of the journey presents all the fine features of the first, for it does not. There is a gradual falling-off in certain respects, although at no point does it strike the eye. All along the way there is proof of thrift, and of good tillage. The number of *antennae* betraying the presence of wireless in the village communities is astonishing. Yet, there is still much to be done before the whole of Poland, west of the Vistula, comes up to the high level of Poznań. Not only in the matter of individual habits, but also in the field of the organization of production and distribution, the Poles in Prussia can serve as a model to all their compatriots.

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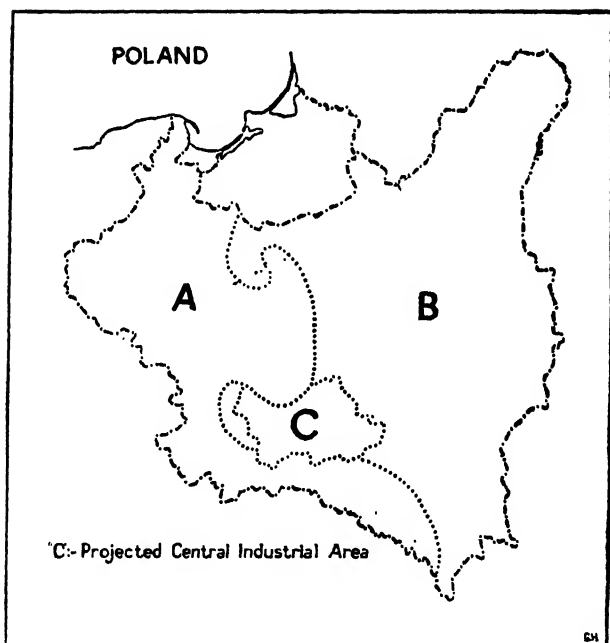
The logic of pre-war policy was simple. Each of the three empires did its best to incorporate the part of Poland under its domination, into its own economic system. The wish was to make it a dependent part of the larger whole, rather than anything approaching a self-contained unit. Certain advantages accrued to the areas concerned, but the whole scheme was unnatural. Further its chief characteristic was exploitation, something no one loves. The people involved, as was to be expected, organised various means of self-defense; and even succeeded up to a point in turning the state of things to their own uses.

Thus the Polish parts of Prussia, having no mineral resources (apart from Upper Silesia), but possessing the finest corn lands and forests in the Reich, profited from the unparelled industrial expansion of the German world after 1870, and became the "granary" of the Empire. All the products of their fields and forests, of live stock and poultry breeding, and of a few industries connected with

agriculture, like the production of sugar from beet root, brewing and distilling were in great demand in the large cities, and brought good prices. Their open countryside remained innocent of industrial enterprise, and still is agricultural to-day. The reverse was the case over the Russian border in Central Poland. Farming went on its own firm way, special areas becoming notable for particular products, like Lublin for wheat; but the marked feature of these provinces, as we saw in an earlier chapter, was the unheard-of expansion of industries. Textiles in the Lodzh area, in Zyrardow and Bialystok, the iron and coal "heavies" in the south-west corner, next door to Silesia, and a few major branches in Warsaw itself. This did not of course, mean any approach to industrialisation in the modern sense of that word, but left the great expanse of the Vistula plain a still undeveloped and virgin countryside.

As for the Austrian provinces, economically they were in a bad way. Largely uplands, in part mountainous, with a poorer soil and a rawer climate—the northern slopes of the Carpathians, they did produce for export various raw materials, such as timber, wool, hides and some bread stuffs and dairy produce. But they were hindered at every turn by the Hapsburg regime from developing industries, so that only two articles of note came from Galicia: salt from the ancient mines near Cracow, and—beginning in the nineties, oil from the slopes of the eastern Carpathians. This discrimination had a double foundation. No competition was desired with the industries of Austria and of Bohemia, the latter being chiefly in German hands. Further, no larger enterprises were wanted in the areas lying close to the Russian frontier. As a result, the Austrian provinces of Poland remained the poorest, though one of the most picturesque and densely populated crown lands of the Hapsburg Empire.

Enough has been said to make clear the unequal levels of economic and technical culture in Poland, and the reasons why. In part the Polish people themselves were to blame. They could have done more under the Hapsburgs and the Romanoffs than they did, though every kind of obstacle



was put in their way. A sample of the indifference of those rulers to everyday well-being in Poland can be seen from the fact that from 300 miles of their courses the Vistula and San rivers possessed only one bridge.

The studies made in our day by the Poles of the needs, and the possibilities for improving their national economy, have resulted in the dividing of the country roughly into Poland A, Poland B, and Poland C. Strictly speaking the whole country falls into two parts, A and B. Region A includes almost everything west of the Vistula, and the foothills of the Carpathians with their timber, salt and oil. To Region B belongs everything else; the whole country east of the Middle Vistula, and the Massif Central in its elbow; as well as the basin of the Dniester in the South-east. Here there dwell 15,000,000 people, a great many of them at a bare subsistence level, but entertaining brave hopes for a better future. The name Poland C has been given to the part Region B which lies around the junction of the Vistula and the San, notably to the south of it. The goal of Polish national planning is, in a word, to help Region B in lifting its economic and cultural existence to something similar to that of A. This process is being furthered by a steady immigration eastward from the western provinces.

As for Poland C, the worst off of all parts of the country, it is now receiving special attention on the part of the state. Though poor in certain respects, being the largest single district in the new state, which never produces enough food for the needs of its people, it has potentialities for becoming a centre of permanent prosperity. Close by are unmined treasures of raw materials. The rivers offer an abundance of water-power, the overcrowded village communities a ready reservoir of labour. With this in mind the Government has proceeded to a public undertaking, far more complicated than the building of Gdynia, which, as the Poles say will bake several cakes at one fire. The whole balance of the national economy is one-sided until now, and even the safety of the state demands change. Details of what is already being done with this central industrial region, will be given in the next chapter.

The Good Earth

Earth thou art, and unto the earth shalt thou return !
says an ancient dictum. Another and no less true one
would be: From the earth shalt thou live !

It is Poland's good fortune to possess her full share of
fertile soil, though there is as elsewhere a fair measure of
barren or near-barren as well. The official statistics, in
round numbers of hectares (1 hect.—2½ acres) are as fol-
lows :

Total area just under . . .	38,300,000
Of this forest . . .	8,300,000
Of this water and waste . . .	4,000,000

This leaves of usable land 26,000,000 hectares, divides into
the following uses :

Tillage	18,500,000
Meadow	3,000,000
Pasture	2,700,000
Orchard and Garden	500,000

Statistics are a wearying business for any reader, but a
few more must be given to make the picture clear. We
know in round figures, valid for the year 1931, the number of
land holdings in the country, and their size. Of this number
three-fifths had less than twelve acres each ! Over one-
fifth had more than twelve, but less than twenty-five.
One-tenth had more than twenty-five but less than 125,
while only 15,000 had more than this amount.

These few data speak volumes. They reveal the over-
whelming prevalence of dwarf holdings (two-fifths of these
with less than five acres each), on which families did not
live, but rather starved. Not for nothing has there been
a word in the Polish language for the pre-harvest period,
in which there was little left to eat and the only thing to do
was to pull your belt tighter. Were it not for the lowly
potato, the consumption of which in Poland, in the years
1930-33, was just under one ton yearly per head of the

population—eight times that of England and nearly three times that of France, the masses would have long since been done for. For millions white bread has appeared on the table only on the great days of the year, and rye bread at best once a day. From Easter onwards there is usually none of the latter.

Small wonder that when the war was over, the cry of the peasants here as in every country in eastern Europe was for land. As we have seen, almost nothing was done about it officially for a number of years. That does not mean that re-distribution of the soil was not going on at all—far from it. It means only that no organised effort at land reform on a large scale was decided on, though serious attempts—most of them unsuccessful, were made to foster the settlement of returned soldiers.

The first concrete plans were announced by the Act of Parliament of December 28, 1925. The parcellation of the big estates—for reasonable compensation, was to be proceeded with at the rate of 5,000,000 acres yearly—a figure that could not possibly be realised. Voluntary sales of land were permitted, and even encouraged; only they were to be reported to the authorities. A larger retainable minimum was provided for than had originally been planned, particularly in the Eastern Borderlands. Further, in cases where special industries were an integral part of the manor-economy, e.g. brewing, distilling, sugar refining, or the making of butter and cheese, exemptions from the general rules were assured. In the face of strong opposition, and with a great controversy raging all the time as to the merits and demerits of large *versus* small farms, land parcellation has gone steadily forward, until by 1938 the better part of available lands had been converted into small holdings. Much of this has gone to create new homesteads, but a good portion has been used to make into adequate farms thousands of dwarf holdings, from which the heads of families had been trying in vain to wrest a living.

The total acreage parcelled out into new farms by 1937 had reached over 2,500,000 hectares, close on 6,500,000

acres. The number of new homesteads thus created, or markedly reinforced has been almost 700,000. Enquiry among friends and acquaintances last year brought out the fact that nearly all the big estate owners have had to give up well over half of their properties. For the improving of dwarf holdings in the years 1935-37, over two-thirds of all parcellations were applied.

It has been urged by enthusiasts that the whole process has been too slow, and by comparison with what has gone on in Soviet Russia or even in Roumania and Czechoslovakia this is true. Nevertheless it is arguable that a more hasty plan of action would not have been in the best interests of the nation as a whole, unless one was prepared to do grave injustice to the principle of private property. In any case a campaign now being pursued by minister Poniatowski is a thoroughgoing one, and the whole process will approach completion in the next year or two. To the opposition that was to be expected from the side of the landed gentry, there has come from elsewhere a good deal of criticism of the methods followed. Poniatowski is accused of creating still more of the dwarf holdings, which common sense has shown are a hindrance rather than a help. The explanation given for this is that provision will be made in time all over Poland for subsidiary earning on the part of these small-holders in one or another branch of industry. Better, it is urged, have a few acres of land than none at all. In other words, the argument is a social one, rather than economic.

There have been complications of a special kind. In the western provinces the German landowners have repeatedly charged that they are being unfairly treated, in that more land is being taken from them and at a faster rate than from their Polish neighbours. This is probably true enough for the simple reason that nearly all the big estates in these areas were in German hands, and they have had to accept an unpleasant turn of fortune along with the rest. Any special discrimination on political grounds would be hard to prove. In Upper Silesia the great land barons, with the Prince of Pless at their head, were protected from this

process during the interim of fifteen years provided by the Geneva Convention. In 1937 this Convention lapsed and since then the Silesian estates have also been subject to the regulations obtaining elsewhere.

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In the Eastern Borderlands the problem is a different one. Here the great estates were mostly owned by Poles, while the surrounding peasant population is chiefly Ukrainian. Two ancient principles have come into direct collision. There has been a congenital aversion all over Central Europe to parting with your land to anyone who is not of your own nation or faith. This would mean the settling of Polish farmers and their families on the new-holdings created from the big estates, and such a practice has been openly demanded from the start by the more ardent patriots. The other principle, considered no less sacred, demands that the first claim to all lands parcelled up, belongs to the peasants of the district; and that only when the needs of these have been met so far as possible should outsiders be allowed to come in. Clearly, both parties cannot be satisfied, and in the sequel neither is. The Ukrainians however, have come out best, for the Government has sought to hold to the second rather than to the first of these "dogmas".

Statistics show that the land holdings of Ukrainians in the three provinces where they are in the majority, have mounted steadily. As has been pointed out by authorities like the geographer, Professor Romer of Lwow, in published documents, this kind of thing may well be risky from the point of view of state security. All remember that it was their tenacity and skill in keeping their land, which made the position of the Poles in Prussia in pre-war years impregnable. The same things holds for the Ukrainians to-day. Hence the danger, say the "patriots", to Polish interests in this part of the country. The reply of the government is, in effect, the following: whatever the validity of this argument, the risk must be taken. The rights of the Minority, as defined in the Constitution, are something

that must be held sacred, and no peasant people can prosper unless it has its share of the land.

Two other phases of the land problem ought not to be passed over. One is the consolidation (commassation) of the small farms, which have been made up of strips, often lying far apart. This has been going forward all over the country, and is now virtually completed. The other is the much bigger task of land amelioration.

Like every large country in Europe, Poland has extensive "sub-marginal" areas; some of them only needing special treatment to make them productive, others being of no value for cultivation until properly drained and reclaimed. On these lines much has been done during the years, both by private initiative and at public expense. Nearly half a million hectares had been improved by 1937. The proper regulation of rivers and their tributaries is a part of this process, and the bring of unprofitable forest preserves also. I have seen some of this in the north-eastern provinces, and it recalls in many ways the winning of the wilds of northern Manitoba or Saskatchewan. State assistance can always be counted on by those who seek in any way to reclaim and improve waste lands; but much more capital is necessary if it is to be carried to completion.

The special case of this kind are the broad marshlands of the Prypiet River, lying in the very centre of Poland's eastern frontier. These territories present a curious spectacle, possibly unique in Europe. In winter they are frozen solid, and one can get anywhere on sleighs. In summer they are a mingled mass of sedge and meadow on the one hand, and of crazy lakes and slow-moving streams on the other. Over these the sparse population get about from place to place in primitive boats or punts, and the curse of mosquitoes is general. Only public enterprise on a large scale, well thought out and backed by a wealth of capital, can accomplish this work. Its proper execution would do two things. It would make homes possible for, on an estimate, at least half a million souls. Further, it would ensure the completion of the canal-system linking up the Vistula with the Dnieper, and make

possible the transit water-way so often talked about from the Black sea basin to the Baltic and the Atlantic Ocean.

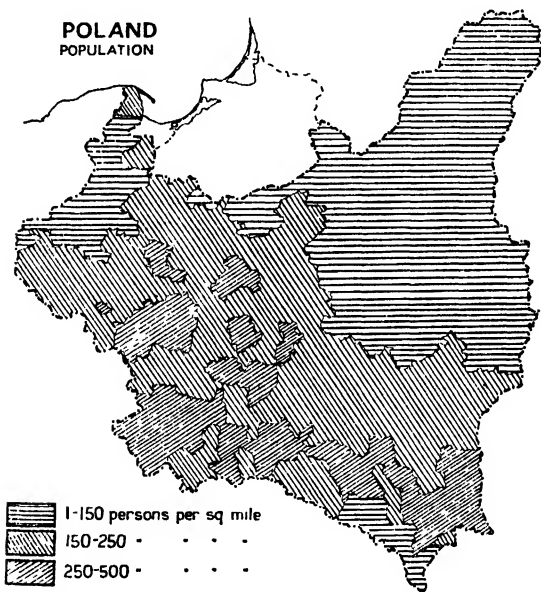
The Population Problem

"The soil," said a German authority, "is always looking for better people to till it!" In this epigram there is contained an important truth. Every poor farmer must know that he will sooner or later lose his land to a better one. On a larger canvas, the people that have not been taught to exploit properly its natural resources, can reckon with the coming of others who will take them away—whether by purchase or by force; and then proceed to get more from them than it did. One of the surer means of achieving intense cultivation of the soil is a denser and more industrious population. The examples of Denmark and Holland occur to all. In general, unless land poverty makes things hopeless, large families are an asset in the country, while they may well be a liability in the town.

On recovering her freedom, Poland had the same population per square mile as France—about 180. Since then it has risen roughly by one quarter. No one regards France as an over-populated land, for the reason that large parts of it are industrialised and can carry almost any density of populations. With Poland the reverse is the case. Two thirds of her inhabitants live in the country, her industries are still in teenage state of development. Only one quarter of the people live in towns and cities: precisely the reverse of what we have in the United Kingdom, where only one quarter are on the land. Neither of these extremes is good.

In particular a larger fraction of the urban population ought to be Polish; by which I mean Christian, as distinguished from Jewish. The new state inherited a very unwholesome condition of things from the past; in that, through no one's fault in particular, the majority of her small towns had a far larger proportion of Jews in them than Christians. We shall see later why this is not good for either party. It suffices to say here that both nation

POLAND
POPULATION



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and state are resolved, and for good reasons that this shall not go on longer.

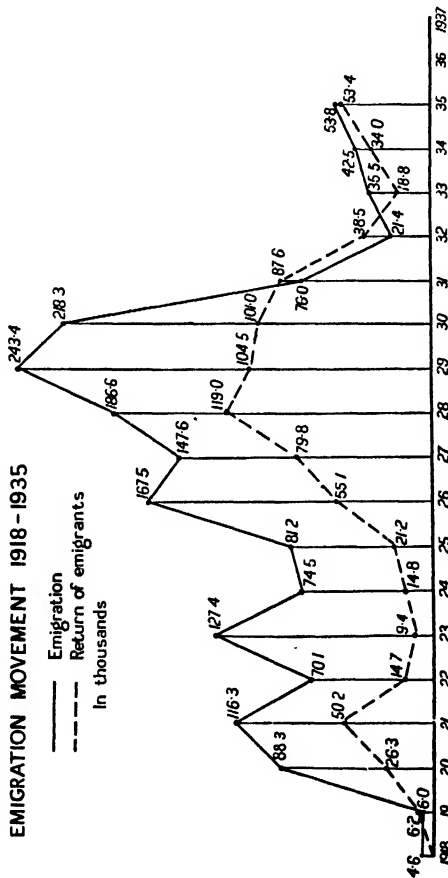
Even if they were not so resolved, it is set for discard anyway. Not the fact that Poland has a rather denser population than France is what matters; but this, that in the rural areas, wherever people live from the soil, for every one Frenchman to the square mile, there are two and a half Poles! This being the case, even intensive tillage of the soil, and Poland is far as yet aspiring to this, could not and would not solve the problem. This serious over-crowding of the Polish countryside is not realised by the casual traveller, but it goes far to explain a number of things talked about rather freely in the daily press. Among others the rioting with the Jews, and the unrest among the peasants two years ago.

The causes of this state of things are not far to seek. Poland's natural birth-rate is one of the highest in Europe. As better health conditions have got down to the masses, infant mortality is far lower than it used to be. Now, in pre-war days there went overseas a steady stream of emigration from Polish lands; not for the fun of it, but in order to live. One of the biggest shares of this emigration came from the small district known to-day as Poland C. In addition, there were scores of thousands who spent the summers as seasonal labourers in Germany. The loss of manhood to the new world was a serious thing, though we have seen how it was all repaid in due course. Since the war, as all know, the doors to emigration have been practically closed. Only one thing was left to help out, the opportunities offered in France for large numbers of workmen for the task of reconstruction. The height of this, as shown by the Chart, was reached in 1929—all kinds of emigration amounted to nearly a quarter of a million. Three years later it was down to one tenth of that figure, and the rise since then has been slow. (Cf. Buele: chap. 8).

What is the rising generation of peasants' sons and daughters to do? The amount of land still free for purchase or settlement has become very small indeed. Emigration

EMIGRATION MOVEMENT 1918-1935

— Emigration
 --- Return of emigrants
 In thousands



facilities are cut off. The youth on leaving school find themselves, in the American phrase, "all dressed up with nowhere to go".

Already in the twenties a beginning was made in the setting up of "Christian" shops in the villages and towns, as a means for challenging the monopoly of petty trading hitherto enjoyed by the Jews. (Only where the Co-operative had been established was this monopoly threatened hitherto.) From 1930 onwards this move became more general, driven as if by an elemental urge that could not be denied. It was partly due to the often quite unsound notion that the business man "always had money," and therefore was better off than the peasant. In many small towns Christian retail shops appeared, and Christian "booths" were set up on market days in the squares. It was this latter, with which went a certain amount of picketing of Jewish shops by the youth, that provoked the use of violence on the part of those threatened, and led in places to open riot and bloodshed. In nearly every case the assault was made by the Jews, who saw that their daily bread was being taken from them. Disorder was the result, and of course a great cry in the press at home and abroad.

The trend of things however is not to be denied. Nine-tenths of any population are bound to get their way over one-tenth, cruel as that assertion may seem. This particular conflict has little or nothing to do with what is called anti-Semitism, and is almost wholly rooted in the pinch of poverty and the congestion of population. Not only in Poland but in the whole of Europe this latter is a serious problem. The smallest continent—and there are six in all, tries to feed and employ one-quarter of all the human race. Poland, one of the poorest countries of that continent, has nearly one-quarter of all the Jews in the world: most of them of the least desirable type, whether physically or culturally. For generations they have been the victims of discrimination, and they deserve a better fate. Something ought to, nay rather *must* be done about this. A notable Jewish leader made the public statement in Warsaw three years ago, that there were a million too

many Jews in Poland. He went on to say that some place must be found in the wide world within ten years for this surplus, otherwise no one could foretell what might happen. This declaration stirred up a *furor* among his own people; but the first part of it is the simple truth, and the second is a warning that all the world should take to heart.

Can nothing be done in Poland itself to solve the population problem? Certainly there can, and much is being done even now: but with too little hopes of success. The three main lines on which a solution can be found seem clear enough:

1. More intensive exploitation of the land, in particular the reclaiming of waste areas, among others the fenlands already described. This process can do much, but it is not something that can be achieved in a year or in five years, for it requires much capital and that capital is not in sight. Worse still, all that may be gained on these lines is likely to be swallowed up as one goes along by the natural increase of Catholic and Orthodox elements.

2. Industrialisation on a grand scale, the limits of which may be said roughly to be determined by the chances of securing markets at home and abroad. In this both Christians and Jews might well share, but it too, takes time and above all, money. Those who want to see a speeding up of this process, can draw a simple conclusion as to how they can help.

3. Emigration—both of Jewish and of Christian elements. The possibilities here are something over which Poland has no control. The great powers, notably those holding vast open spaces beyond the seas, can continue, if they will, to make difficult or even impossible the relieving of the congested lands of Europe of their surplus of inhabitants, but they will do so at their peril. Europe is torn by dissensions, and overcrowding is unquestionably one of the fundamental causes for this. As a Canadian I say it with regret that my own country has not as yet come to take the statesmanlike view that would be worthy of her. It

is a reproach to western civilisation that even the few thousand refugees now being driven from their homes, many of them splendid people, have to beg on their knees before they can get admittance anywhere in the world.

To return to Poland, Bernard Newman has just given in the *Daily Telegraph* and *Morning Post* some arresting figures. Half a million boys are born every year in this new state, not far short of the number born in the whole of Germany. Let no one think that because there are so many they are of inferior quality. I stood on the street corners in Warsaw in September 1938 on the opening day of the school year, and watched the youth of high-school age—boys and girls, march past in thousands, accompanied by their teachers, on their way to the church services in various parts of the city. No doubt the young looked their best at the end of the holiday season, but it was an unforgettable sight.

The population of Poland bids fair by 1950 to overtake that of France, though Poland is only two-thirds as large. From the point of view of man power, whether for peace or war purposes, this is all to the good, but it is fast becoming a burden rather than a gain except as the national economy develops the ways and means of turning this man power to constructive ends. Moral and material backing from the outside world would be an investment which might pay unusual dividends.

The National Minorities

National Minorities are not likely to have a happy time of it anywhere in Europe at present. In Poland they are better off than is commonly supposed, but no one would say that they have everything they desire, or even everything ideal justice would demand. They number three-tenths of the total population, and have been described by many journalists and travellers as a serious element of weakness. Largely owing to their presence I have heard it argued that Poland is only another Austria-Hungary; or even that, having got rid of Turkish domination in the

Balkans, the makers of the Versailles Treaty proceeded to create another "sick man of Europe" elsewhere. This kind of thing should be branded as gross exaggeration. It may be doubted whether the new Poland has been hampered in a single major matter of national policy during twenty years by the fact of her Minorities. Dissatisfied as they may have been, there is not one of them that is desirous to-day of breaking away, and belonging to any neighbour Power. In the year of crisis the continent has passed through since the *Anschluss*, no indications of weakness on the part of the Polish government have been manifest.

The two lesser Minorities, the Germans and the White Ruthenians, may be passed over in a few sentences. Not because they are unimportant, but because neither of them presents a serious problem.

The Germans are too scattered to be anything else than a possible source of local unrest; even though they become, as many have, tools in the hands of a neighbour. The Nazi movement has proclaimed the unification of all German-speaking elements on the continent. Actually something far different has resulted. There is less unity to-day among Germans in Poland than there was ten years ago. Notwithstanding all appearances, it may be questioned whether any solid enthusiasm for the Swastika is to be found there. What is more, nothing will make the lot of the scattered German communities harder than the flaunting of white stockings, or the undisciplined use of the Hitler greeting. The latter is not forbidden by law, but it is unpopular in the nation.

The White Ruthenians (or Russians) in the north-east have the advantage of being an almost solid group, and of being in possession of the land. Partly Catholic, partly Orthodox, they are a peasant stock, who have no reason to desire incorporation in the Soviet Union. Most of them have but one concern, that for the daily bread. Of old they had few schools, to-day they have more. The sense of group togetherness that marks the Ukrainians to the south is still lacking. It may emerge in time, and when it does there will be a totally new situation.

The Jews

With the Jews and the Ukrainians it is a different matter. For many reasons the former have as unenviable a lot, as that of the latter is enviable. Hopelessly scattered in small units, often segregated from their Christian neighbours, driven to occupations largely parasitic, for the most part innocent of education, and rooted in the narrow and unfruitful traditions of the fathers, the millions of Eastern Jews (*Ostjuden*) wage an uphill struggle for existence, and often have to resort to methods that have won for them the hostility of their neighbours. I refer, of course, to the untaught masses, and not to the small fraction that has become part and parcel of the nation in which they are found.

From long observation, I am convinced that the antagonism which is everywhere latent and at times flares up, is neither religious, nor racial, nor class, nor economic, *as such*, but lies simply in the fact of difference. This involves the others, of course; but they will not be understood rightly save from this angle. The Jews are *different*, and for them the word means *better*. This sense of superiority has been handed down for ages, and has been ministered to by martyrdom. They have their own sabbath, their own food, their own clothes—forced on them long ago, and clung to in our day as a distinguishing mark; their own schools, their own worship, and their own ways of doing things. Every society in the world is mistrustful of any element to be found in its midst, undigested and undigestible. Living in any country in the world, whether Canada or Rumania, only the assimilated Jew—or at least the one seeking assimilation, can be happy. Right here lies the crux of the whole matter, and there is fault on both sides.

Wickham Steed wrote the simple truth twenty-seven years ago in *The Hapsburg Monarchy*:

“Anti-Jewish feeling can almost invariably be expressed in terms of the percentage of Jews to non-Jews intermingled with other elements of a community. When the percentage rises

above a certain point,—a point determined in each case by the character of the non-Jewish population, anti-semitism makes its appearance and finds expression in ways varying from social ostracism to massacre.”

He goes on to quote the answer of Jews in Slovakia to a question put them by a candidate for political honours, as to how things stood:

“When we are two or three in a village, things go well and there is a living for everybody. But when others come, things go badly. Then there is competition, and the peasants hate us.”

That answer goes to-day for Poland. The trouble there is that “others are always coming, and there are too many of them.

There *is* anti-Semitism in Poland: the simon-pure thing, which is a cultural antagonism based either on religious, or racial, or national grounds. But it is not wide-spread. A few Catholic priests harbour it, and seek renown by crusading for it. The National Democratic Party, following their Leader Dmowski, have placed it in the front of their programme; and done a dis-service to Poland by so doing. The whole recent agitation against mingling with Jewish colleagues in the universities can be traced to the youth of this Party. Not that the economic factor, described above, plays no part, for it does. But the movement is frowned on by the Church as an institution, and every form of violence is distasteful to the government.

There are those in the country who point to the successes (sic!) of Hitler in getting rid of his one per cent of Jews in Germany; and advocate something of the same kind for dealing with the ten per cent of Jews in Poland. But the nation as a whole rejects out of hand any resort to such means. While agreeing that Poland has far too many of this non-Polish element, and desiring to get rid of a good part of it, they say—Not that way! Such brutalities would shatter their own self-respect, and demean them in the eyes of the world. Only as a last resort, when all other ways and means have proved fruitless, might some kind of drastic action be entertained as a policy.

Meantime processes are at work, which are doing much to civilise the orthodox masses of Jews. They are going to school, and for the first time in history. They are beginning to play games—a revolutionary thing. This will transform their whole physical and mental make-up. The masses play football, the upper classes lawn tennis and other games, and compete with their Polish neighbours. Most of the younger generation speak and think in Polish—again for the first time in history. Even some of their distinguishing racial characteristics begin to disappear. A good deal of intermarrying goes on. This is all to the good.

Yet the vast majority, notably of the older generation, lives as before. And one of their misfortunes is the lack of solidarity among themselves. Nothing is more mistaken than to think of the Jews in Poland as a homogeneous group. There are many well-to-do among them, and the grip they have on many branches of business, both wholesale and retail, is so great that the whole truth about it is kept from the Polish press in order not to stir up a nationwide revulsion. Statistics would show that they get a fair share of contracts for serving the army, the towns, and the usual demands of state enterprises. It is a fact, that town councils have more than once begged to be allowed to place important orders for this or that commodity with Christian firms!

A determined move is being made to restrict their numbers in certain of the professions, in which in the past they have been represented far beyond the proportion of Jews in the commonwealth. Not to do this would mean running the risk of having nothing but Jewish pharmacists, or barristers, or physicians—just as it was in the Middle Ages. The changes coming in the retail business, or in the arts and crafts like butchering, baking, tailoring, or the fur and shoe trade, have been explained above. Hardships to many will result, but this step is also necessary, in order to get a proper balance in the national economy. No line should be the monopoly of one section of the community: not even the collecting of old iron. Moreover, this will help the Jews themselves in the long run. The

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truth of this was well put by a writer in ~~the~~ **Zionist Review**,
October 14, 1938.

PROF. G. RAM REDDY MEMORIAL TRUST

"The Polish Jews defend themselves, and transform their positions according to changed conditions. During the past few years one can observe a clear diversion of Jews from the free and middle-class professions, and especially from trade. More and more young men are turning toward manual work, because a qualified workman finds work more readily than a lawyer or a philosopher. . . .

"Nowadays tens of thousands of Jews, including non-Zionists, choose the way of productivisation and proletarianisation. . . . The number living on trade falls constantly, and there are in Poland nearly half a million workmen as compared with 200,000 ten years ago."

The lack of unity in Jewish circles can be seen even by the casual observer. One has only to look at the number of Jewish Parties in politics, to discover it. But the great severance has come with the rise of Zionism. Many of us regard this, necessary as it might look to be, as a misfortune for the Jewish world. Zionism has split the ranks wide open, and no one can say whether it will be closed again, or when. Here are those who, no matter where they are domiciled claim to belong to the Jewish nation, with its language, its literature and its traditions; and its loud claim for a national home. One may admire these patriots, but one wonders at their innocence of realism. On the other side are those who wish to be French, if their home is in France, Roumanian if their home is among Roumanians, and so on. For them the vital thing is their Hebrew faith, and they are a denomination like any other. Surely this is the normal thing; one might add the only acceptable thing in regularly appointed countries, such as the United Kingdom. It is no doubt true, that grave obstacles have long stood in the way of attaining this end in certain lands, and among certain peoples. But the declaration of nationalism has surely made that situation worse and not better. It has given to those who dislike them the very tool they were looking for. In effect the Jews are now told: You say you are Jews, not Poles or Germans: splendid, we

have no objections ; then get out ! This may be unjust, but it looks plausible ; and the Jews will suffer from it.

There is in sight no solution for the Jewish problem in Poland. Time will show whether one is possible that will be generally accepted. In the right sense of the word they are not a Minority, for a great part of them think of themselves as Poles, of the Hebrew confession. Many have been completely assimilated, and many more would greatly like to be. It is those who do not belong to these groups, who are worst off. Nor will they better their condition by appeals to their cultural and economic solidarity in the outside world (a thing many of us wonder at !), for protection against the Polish nation or state. This sort of thing is objectionable to any self-respecting Power in the world. What is needed is first patience, for nothing so complicated and of such dimensions can be settled in a twelvemonth. Next, understanding, and that on the part of all who are interested. Thirdly collaboration, notably among Jews and Poles on the spot. This path will lead to better things, and I doubt whether any other can.

The Ukrainians

I spoke of the position of the Ukrainians as being enviable by comparison. It is arguable that they are the best situated of any Minority in Europe. They are a large and compact group, they have more land than any other such group known, and they are a hard-working and—with few exceptions—well-disciplined people. Their nation—if the term can be used of the thirty-odd millions said to belong under this name—is the only larger folk-group that did not recover its independence after the world war. Both culturally and from the economic stand-point they are making steady progress. If they would leave politics alone for a while, and devote themselves to deeper and more lasting things, their future would be as certain as anything on earth. That is why I call their position enviable. An adequate survey of that position would require a small volume, and I am one of the least competent to write it.

These few pages can do nothing except draw attention to some of the most relevant factors in the whole issue.

The Ukrainians living in Poland must be thought of as two groups, which have not yet really come together. Those who belonged to Austria before 1914, and those who came to Poland from Russia. This distinction is important, for the past leaves its mark on the present. The former are largely, though not altogether, adherents of the Uniate Church (Greek Catholics), and owe spiritual allegiance to Rome; while the latter are almost wholly Orthodox in faith. In a part of Europe where religious affiliations have always been more developed than national, this is a significant matter. But there is something else. While the one-time Austrian Ukrainians were politically articulate, possessing the franchise and a representation in the provincial Diet in Lwow, the latter had virtually no political experience or orientation at all.

But there are still other complications. Most Ukrainians would agree that the cultural renaissance of their "nation" had its greatest exponent in Shevchenko, and had its home in what we should call south Russia. But the national movement as a political thing was born and grew to manhood in the Austrian province, what is now south-eastern Poland. Not Kiev but Lwow has been made the focus point of this latter; and it was nurtured by Vienna as an anti-Russian political instrument—anti-Polish as well, though in a different way. In this case the grounds were the ancient dodge of imperialism—*dividere et imperare*!

Thus Ukrainian nationalism had a battle on two fronts. On the one hand with imperial tendencies toward reducing all the nationalities to uniformity, to the acceptance of Russian cultural loyalties: on the other with Polish national aspirations (as yet without state backing), which they considered to be imperialist also. But alongside the nationalists there was a strong pro-Russian sentiment in this province, even among Uniate believers—the so-called Old Ruthenians. They were a constant source of worry to the Hapsburg regime, and they came openly to the fore when the Russians occupied the country in the autumn of 1914. Even some

nationalists were not averse to Russian conquest, arguing that it would at least mean the uniting of virtually their whole people under a single sovereignty. I mention this Old Ruthenian group only to show that again, as with other Minorities, the appearance of a united people is far from the reality.

A few figures are necessary. The Uniates number just under 3,000,000, the Orthodox about 2,000,000. The Head of the former Church is the Metropolitan of Halicz (the ancient capital of this principality, now a small town), Archbishop Andrew Szeptycki of Lwow. He was born a Pole, and decided while at school to become a priest of the church. But a "peasant priest", as the phrase then was; by which was meant a clergyman of the church that served the peasants rather than the gentry. It would not be too much to say that he, more than a legion of others, has made the Ukrainian National movement. Under his control are two non-Ukrainian groups, the Old Ruthenians just mentioned, and a body of some 400,000 Poles—descendants of emigrants of long ago, who found no Roman Catholic church to serve them, and were soon absorbed by the Uniates. Many of them proceeded, as generations passed, to become ardent Ukrainians.

The clergy of the Uniate Church are almost solidly nationalist in sympathy, and they do much to carry and strengthen the bonds of understanding. For that reason many of them are suspect by the Polish authorities. Evidence is not lacking of the way they have "stolen" children of Polish homes for their faith and Ukrainian sympathies—at least that is the way the Poles put it. Actually what happened here was much like what happened in Poznan to the German Catholic settlers—the famous Bambergers, brought there as a part of the colonisation programme of sixty years back by Prussia. In both cases they were neglected by their own church, and they found their way to another!

The Uniate Church was created toward the end of the 16th century by the Polish Jesuit Fathers, as the spear-

head of their attempt to recover the Schism—Orthodox Russia—for the Roman faith. It was a compromise: the Old Slavonic being permitted in the liturgy instead of Latin, and the priests being allowed to marry. I agree with those who regard this piece of work as a misfortune, not only for all concerned, but also for Poland. This half-way house has been and still is two things no church should ever be: a bone of political contention, and a political instrument used for ends that have nothing to do with the kingdom of God. Few compromises are fruitful of good, and this one is no exception.

The new Polish commonwealth started at a disadvantage in the whole tissue of its relations with the Ukrainians. This was due to the legacy of class hostility, centuries old, consequent on the fact that in this great land the land-magnate and the Squire were Poles and Roman Catholics, while the peasants—(until the middle of last century, they were serfs)—were Ruthenian and Uniate. Polish land-lordism was neither better nor worse than that elsewhere in Europe—there were good Squires and bad; but since the serfs were freed they have been little impressed by the fact of “quality”, and they have been carried away by the longing for the land. That is why so much tact and goodwill were needed after the Austrian provinces got their autonomy in 1867, and so much mischief was done by the Endeks, starting a generation later.

The church controversy has made all this still worse. Put simply it is this. After 1863 the Tsarist government set about recovering a great many parishes “stolen” from Orthodoxy during three centuries by Catholicism, both the Roman and the Uniate rites. The districts south of the Fenlands were most severely dealt with, because the Uniate Church meant the threat of Ukrainian separatism. Polish historians estimate that nearly 900 churches were thus made Orthodox, and often by harsh means. After the Great War both the interests of the *ecclesia militans* and of the new state were held to demand the adjusting of this wrong, and the “revindication” of the “stolen” churches. During fifteen years hundreds of parishes have

been made Uniate or Roman again, many houses of prayer closed, as not being needed; and not a few, which had fallen into disrepair, pulled down. None possessing architectural value have been destroyed, and the Poles assure me that no community is left without spiritual oversight at no great distance. In not a few cases this action has been taken with the approval of the people, but in many there has been open opposition. Such things are not good for peace and comity.

There is one other source of complaint. All along the frontier special precautions are taken by every continental Power, to ensure national safety. Many Orthodox communities in this belt, not being regarded as "safe", have been given the choice either of becoming Catholic or moving elsewhere. Of course protests are vain, for the reason is obvious: but the sense of hardship in the hearts of those people remains. Even though many of them had Polish ancestors, and so are thought of as legitimate prey by state and church, the cause of disaffection will remain.

And now for the record of events. We saw that there were six months of unhappy fighting around Lwow in the winter of 1918-19 in which the Ukrainians lost out: that the present frontiers were made by the Treaty of Riga in 1921; and that they were confirmed by the Council of Ambassadors two years later. Poland was to institute autonomy in the Ukrainian provinces, and this has never been done. The project passed by the Diet in 1922 could not be carried out, nor has it been revived since then. Repeated demands for this have been made in the Diet and the press by the nationalist leaders, but without result. The story of the tension, at times lesser, at times more acute, is not a pleasant one. With some justice the Ukrainian question has been called the Irish question of Central Europe. In the one as in the other, the past has left a shadow on the present; and the doings of the extremists on both sides have been the biggest obstacle to any settlement in the present.

For years after 1926 the face of things looked better. The Ukrainian vote went strongly for the Non-Party Bloc

in 1928 and still more so in 1930. This trend alarmed the terrorists, who began a campaign of sabotage, rick-burning and other violence that went on for months. The Polish authorities were at first too lenient, and then suddenly too harsh. The "pacification" that was carried out by the military brought sufferings on many innocent people, and left a train of ill-will behind it. Then came the depression years, with almost endless misery in many parts of the Polish countryside, the Ukrainians suffering too. Unrest was rife, some of it fostered by Communists. Both nations saw the danger, and in connection with the adoption of the 1935 Constitution, an understanding was arrived at by the Ukrainian Centrum known as UNDO and the government, by which both should do their part in achieving "normalisation". The Ukrainian leaders took at their face value the plain speaking of Articles 109 and 110 in the Annex of the new Constitution, and felt justified in expecting "a new deal". Three years later, on May 7, 1938 the Congress of UNDO issued a declaration that startled the country. It formally announced [that they had waited three years for the promised change for the better, and that none had come !

The storm in the Polish press, notably that of the *Endeks*, was immediate. It looked as though they had been quietly assuming all the time that the Ukrainian problem was settled. For them the only thing needed was that the Minority should cease to engage in any political or national activities, and that the *status quo* should be maintained. Now they got a rude shock, and their reactions were informing. Europe was under the shadow of the *Anschluss*, and they charged that foreign interests were behind the move, that Wasyl Mudryj was copying Henlein, that the Ukrainians were not playing cricket to start something at such a time, etc., etc. No one faced the real issue, that for fifteen years the Minority had kept on asking for what had been promised it; and that now, after three years of "truce" it was asking again. Of course, it added the usual protest against the taking away of their schools, exclusion from a share in government service and the army, discrimination

in the matter of admission to the universities, and even economic intrigues like a move to exclude the Ukrainians from profiting from Agrarian Reform, or limitations set to the scope of their co-operative and other organisations. It had been no easy matter for UNDO to discipline its ranks to accept the understanding of 1935. Now any pretence at satisfaction from what had happened was impossible.

No disloyalty to the Polish state was involved, for there was no incentive to it. Polish Ukrainians had visited the Soviet Republic over the frontier in 1928, and seen for themselves how things looked there. The steady flow of news confirmed a state of affairs that was far from attractive. Nor, if the truth be told, would the Moscow authorities welcome the sudden injection of five million immigrants, who could only be trouble-makers, whether for religious or political reasons. Both in their public declarations and in their policy, the Ukrainian leaders have been loyal to Poland throughout. They were to show this when the real crisis came six months later.

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Everyone will remember how, when Czechoslovakia was disarmed last October, the press was full of fantastic stories as to the role of the Carpatho-Ruthenians in the "new order of things". This half-million of poor and ignorant people, were suddenly to become the Piedmont for the creation of a Great Ukraine. Those who knew something of the actual state of things could only smile; and among them were the Polish Ukrainians. They knew full well that nothing could hurt their cause more than to become a tool or pawn in the hands of Great Powers, in some game forced on them from without. Least of all could they trust Nazi Germany. March 1939 brought the complete wiping out of Czechoslovak independence by a single wave of the Nazi arm; and this was a salutary lesson to the few irresponsibles in south-eastern Poland, who talked of welcoming a totalitarian regime in the land. Since then the solidarity of the Ukrainian leaders behind the Polish

plans for defence are known to all. When the Air Defence loan was launched in the Governor's Residence in Lwow, Mudryj and his colleagues were present, and their support has the approval of the majority of their people.

But the Ukrainian problem is not solved. It can only be tackled by a strong government, which will be capable of overriding the inevitable opposition to be met with among Polish nationalists; and it can only be attempted at a time when Poland's international position is such that no one can construe it as a confession of internal weakness. Should Europe move toward peace in the next few months, the opportunity *may* be at hand. In that case, we all should like to see something done.

There are three hurdles to be taken, none of them an easy one:

(i) The practical difficulty caused by the presence of a large Polish Minority in the Ukrainian areas: reaching as high as forty per cent around Tarnopol.

(ii) The fear, rising from distrust, existing in the minds of millions of Poles, that the demand for autonomy is but a step in the direction of complete independence. They remember the Western Ukrainian Republic of 1918. I do not think this view is shared by official circles, but it must be reckoned with. The existence of Ukrainian bureaus in different capitals of Europe, financed no one knows how, does not diminish this fear.

(iii) The pride, with which many Poles declare that Poland is a nation state; and would not readily accept any action that has the effect of conceding equality of dignity and status to any other people inside its borders. They would be shocked if anyone could be able to say that the new commonwealth is a "nationality" state. One may be either amused or annoyed by this point of view, but it is there and cannot be ignored.

I pass over the problem as to what is meant by autonomy, and whether legislative rights can be held to be a part of it. This already too long section will conclude on a note of interrogation, and a frank answer. Is the position of the Ukrainians in Poland therefore desperate? The answer

is: Far from it! The word used about it above was "enviable", and it stands. One has only to look at the economic strength of the people, as shown in their first-rate co-operative organisation and its growth, at their hold on the land, and at their tenacity in regard to speech and religion, to see that they are in an impregnable position. Only one thing can break them—discord from within. But their political future lies not in what is taking place or may take place in their Polish provinces. It is to be judged rather by what takes place in the Great Ukraine across the Soviet border. About that, others must speak.

CHAPTER XI

THE NEW COMMONWEALTH—III

"We inherited Poland," wrote a leading expert a year ago, "with the necessity of paying what may be called the price of independence. . . . The outlay on reconstruction of all that had been destroyed by war was the main item in that price. . . ."

"We inherited a Poland that has been laid bare not only in regard to visible things, but also in respect of money. . . . Our funds were either taken by the enemy, or swallowed up by inflation. Thus the reborn commonwealth had to pay this price, and at the same time to lay foundations for the future, but without liquid assets. All the time it was burdened with the feeding and employment of its growing population."

These sentences strike at the centre of Poland's economic problem, when liberation came—a subject of which much has been said above. In this chapter more details of the way these tasks have been met will be given, but with one word of warning. The writer is not an economist. He will therefore view things from the angle of the layman, and mostly from the human side. In Poland perhaps more than elsewhere human nature, its qualities and its weaknesses, has played a notable part throughout.

In order that a modern state may flourish two things are necessary. At bottom they hang together. As an institution it must pay its way. Revenue must be there to meet the cost of all "services". This revenue is usually derived from one or another form of taxation. I say "mostly" for state socialism can make light of taxation, relying instead on the income from state

enterprises. Of course, the rate-payer does the paying all the same.

The other necessity for the modern state is what is known as a favourable balance of trade. Exchange of goods by way of export or import should come out with a credit and not a debit. Only such countries can forego this necessity of controlling foreign trade, which have earning capacities like carrying of trade for others; or have larger investments abroad, the interest on which restores any lost balance. A series of unfavourable years can upset the financial status of any people. Reserves of gold are used to right them, but when these are done loss of confidence may result abroad, and almost certainly at home as well.

In both these essential matters Poland had a hard row to hoe. A devastated country simply could not be subjected to severe taxation. Some peasants had made money during the war, but others had lost everything. The latter had nothing to tax, the former—with that child's reasoning that arrives at the conclusion most desired by the shortest route, argued that since Poland was now free there would be no taxes to pay! This attitude took years to break down, and the burden of such taxation as was possible fell on the towns, on industry, and on the big estates. Trade was already carrying a fair load of indirect taxation, and industry was in ruins. At best it could hope to save its life, provided cash help could be had in the way of loans; at the worst it had to be taken over by the state, and run on public credit. As for the gentleman farmers, many of them too had been left bankrupt by the war. Potentially they were good pay, but time for recovery was necessary; and something in the way of credits too, unless the thing was to go on limping for years. When the demands for taxes became sterner, they gave up part of their land instead; which was then sold to waiting peasants.

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The prospects in regard to a good balance of trade were not bright. Poland had lost her former markets, a serious thing for the textile industry of Lodzh, but there were worse

troubles. Her chief available export commodities were raw materials and foodstuffs. Of these the post-war world had a surfeit, or seemed to have, and prices were even lower than they always are for that sort of thing. They now went below the cost of production. Thus what went out of Poland brought low returns, but the cost of needed imports was high. Machinery was one example, and other things needed for reconstruction were in the same class. From all which two corollaries:

(i) Do without, let us say, oranges, which must come from abroad, and eat apples which grow at home. Or, a more proper example, do without cotton and jute, and develop your native hemp and linen !

(ii) Proceed as soon as you can to expand your own manufacturing, so as to include as nearly as may be all essential articles for common use.

Right here the human factor came in, and from more than one angle. The Poles had been squires and farmers, and had left business mostly to strangers. Their towns had gone to pieces, and no merchant tradition was left. Not until the middle of the last century did this begin to count again as a national occupation, and an urban middle class begin to rise. Fifty years is too short a time to make good the mistakes of centuries; neither traditions nor connections, nor experience could be gained by more than a handful of people. Hence the disadvantages they laboured under, and these were even worse when it came to recovering foreign trade. For years outside people could not get used to Warsaw not being in Russia, or to Poznan instead of Posen. They had done business with "Russians" and "Germans", but now these same men were not either the one or the other, they were Poles ! Who ever did business with Poles ? This kind of thing took years to break down.

In their own hearts many Poles were curiously lacking in confidence. It was hard to realise that they were masters in their own house. All the difficulties of starting afresh stood out in striking colours, and even hid from their eyes the advantages. They saw the hole in the doughnut, but not the sweetmeat itself. Among these advantages, the

bright lining of the cloud, were the vast reservoir of labour, untold natural resources, almost no burden of public debt, and a clean sheet to work on. Moreover, there was an almost unlimited staying-power in the masses, a readiness to do with the most modest existence, and a sort of mystical faith that just ahead was a better future. The income per head of the population was one of the lowest in Europe, but the simple standard of living went to meet it. Best of all, apart from catastrophes like a crop failure, Poland need never fear a food shortage. Local suffering might arise, but prompt help could be had from not far away.

These were great potentialities, needing only to be realised in fact. Too often they were overlooked. Further, there were the usual prophets of evil, who made things harder for all who wanted to work. In their judgment anything done by a Frenchman or a German or a Russian might succeed, but nothing Polish could hope to make its mark !

“In Poland criticism became an every-day disease : to be found not only among the lower classes but even in the upper strata of society. Even to-day (1938) one may still meet among the older generation something that ought to shame our national pride: the view that ‘under the Germans’ or ‘under the Russians’, things were better. Even among our educated people one finds a tendency to paint in dark colours everything Polish.”

Ten years before these words were written, Premier Grabski had told in his Memoirs of experiences through which he had passed:

“In the course of our deliberations (on public questions) we would constantly meet the fact that the temper of the public, whether taken as a whole or viewed only as the ruling classes, was not in keeping with the real needs of the country. We saw how, in a bad year, the public were not conscious at all of the need for cutting down their consumption. We saw slight tendencies toward thrift, and but a slow pace in production. We saw the emergence of an anti-tax-paying mentality at the moment when the greatest hardiness and endurance were called for ; and an easy submission to suggestion of the worthless character of Polish money, with a consequent flight to the dollar. All these were phenomena harmful to everyone. In addition there was a

steady growth among leading circles of demands on the state, going far beyond its capacity to meet; as well as a readiness to throw the blame on its Ministers for failures, whose causes lay in the weaknesses of Poland when faced by the strength of her neighbours."

Some of the sharpness of these words may be put down to the disappointment of an older man, whose services to his country never received due recognition, but the main lines of the picture are true. Those of us who went through the first ten years of the new Poland can confirm them. Alongside the finest men and women to be found in Europe were many parasites, not a few time-servers, and a great many selfish wastrels. The very people who would condemn the Jews for illegal speculation on the Black Exchange, would be found to be hoarding their savings in dollars! Many a time social workers, who saw a vital need and were trying to organise forces to deal with it, would find the way blocked by someone's vested interest. How often have I seen serious people throw down their hats and throw up their hands, and ask "When shall we ever learn that we are social animals?"

Viewed in the perspective of years this sort of thing can be understood, and even pardoned. People who had not been allowed to do things for themselves, and even punished by law if they insisted on the right of national initiative, cannot be too much censured if in the course of time they lost the habit and mentality for action. Fortunately there were enough resolute souls to take up the work so greatly needing to be done; with the result that Poland's achievements in the economic as well as in other spheres seem almost a miracle. In spite of the depression years, which threw everything back, the national income has risen, the standard of living is higher, the beginnings of domestic capitalisation have been well and truly laid, above all there is a confidence among wider circles in things Polish that no one could find or even dared think about in 1923.

In the outside world too, apart from political matters, a transformation has also followed. Polish products have

become known, and there is a demand for them in a score of countries, where they were never heard of before. The flag of the Polish merchant marine can now be seen on the seven seas. A reputation for solid worth in the products offered, and for integrity in business dealings is being slowly built up. Such things augur well for coming years.

Public Finance

There are certain needs indispensable to any social order to-day. They are elastic, but the minimum of them cannot be ignored. It may be taken as an axiom that to the maker of state budgets, income never looks adequate to meet expenditure. This is particularly true in our day, when the public treasury is thought of as a milch cow, to be milked as regularly as possible. The true statesman will always have "a sense of possibilities", in Cavour's phrase, and cut his coat according to the cloth.

One thing he must not be guilty of. He must not over-tax his people. This was realised even by the publicans of the Roman Empire. It kills the goose that lays the eggs, and is likely to leave the tax-payer in a hostile mood.

Apart from special levies ordained from time to time, taxation in the new Poland has been roughly either direct or indirect. By the latter is meant what the consumer of certain goods pays without knowing it. In continental lands it is the state monopolies, tobacco, alcoholic liquors or even salt and matches, which provide this indirect source. There are also duties on imports, excise on domestic goods, and stamp duties or other minor items. State enterprises, such as railways or the exploitation of forests, are generally thought to do their duty if they pay their way, but the latter should certainly contribute something to the public treasury. In Poland there should be some income from the post-office, for the tariffs both domestic and foreign are twice what they are in Western Europe! As for direct taxation it is much the same as elsewhere, on land, on property, on earned and unearned income, on inheritances, and of course with various graded super-taxes.

(Poland's tariff policy has been dictated almost exclusively by economic considerations. Put simply, its aim have been (a). to produce revenue, (b). to restrict the importation of luxury articles for which a homelier substitute could be found in the country, and (c). to protect her own "infant" industries, in general to encourage enterprise at home. Nevertheless, in making her trade agreements, the new state has not been unmindful of political considerations: in particular avoiding the risk of anything like a monopoly of her trade getting into the hands of a single power.)

The story of public budgeting falls roughly into five years of patchwork, six years of stability, four years of crisis and nearly five years of recovery. It would not be wrong to say that in the first of these periods there was no budgeting at all. From Grabski's day onward there was, with slight lapses, a surplus. The depression years built up a thousand million zlotys in deficit, and the years of recovery are busy restoring the balance. The following figures in millions of zlotys will show the trend:

	1922	1924	1926	1928
Income	420.3	1702.8	2139.4	3008.6
Expenditure	657.4	1660.9	1983.4	2839.6

	1931	1934	1936	1938
Income	2261	2194	2217	2475
Expenditure	2468	2302	2213	2475

Put into pounds the national budget of Poland, whose people numbered 27,000,000 twenty years ago and number 34,500,000 to-day, has risen from roughly £70,000,000 in 1924 to £120,000,000 in 1928, to fall during the crisis to below £80,000,000, and rise by 1938 to just under £100,000,000. This sort of thing is not much more than the yearly budget of New York City. Of course it had and still has a higher purchasing power, though not in every respect. An estimate made in the Birmingham Monograph No. 4 shows that the average income per family in Poland is 34 per cent of that in England, its outlay 35 per cent !

If now we look at the chief sources from which this revenue is derived, we have something like this:

	1926-27	1930-31	1935-36	1938-39
Direct Taxes	585.8	824.1	522	752
Excise	387.5	205.1	175	196
Duties	255.2	350.0	83	175
Monopolies	343.3	882.0	641	692

From these figures can be noted the serious reduction in duties and excise during the bad years, and the great increase in the income from monopolies, till they covered one third of the budget. Whether this is the way to raise money may be debated. In effect it says: if you want to smoke and drink, you must pay for your fun !

In order to ease the almost prostrate position of agriculture both after the war and in the depression the heavier burden of taxation was laid on industries. This was not unnaturally felt to be unjust, and it certainly did mean various dislocations. We shall return to this below, when discussing the obstacles with which industry had to wrestle from the start. Only one point is relevant here. To hamper industry is to cut down the volume of wage-earning, and this hits both the tax-paying power of the masses, and their ability to purchase wares of any kind. It was thought by many to be an unwise policy.

To the outside observer it always seemed as if the heaviest burdens fell on the salaried people of the middle class; in particular on the state employees—including teachers, railway-men and all civil servants. Mostly underpaid, they have had to look on while their pay envelope was mulcted of various dues and taxes, before they ever saw it. For the housewife there was very little left, when she got it. A warm word of recognition is due here to the tens of thousands belonging to the intelligentsia of Poland, who have more than once had to make a face, but draw their belts tighter, and resolve that the new blow must be taken in as the price of the new freedom.

To the national budget figures come very sizeable sums raised and spent by the local governments. This subject

is a big one and would mean telling of the indebtedness incurred by these bodies and the ways taken to meet it, as well as of their various responsibilities to the state and their own districts. Space permits us only to give a bare statement of the money here spent. Beginning from almost nothing, the totals raised in 1924 were just over 213,000,000 zlotys, (exclusive of Silesia). This grew enormously in the good years, and passed a thousand millions in 1930-31. It fell by one third during the crisis, but has since risen now to 750,000,000 zlotys. It will be seen that this sum adds nearly thirty million pounds to the total taxation of the nation—one pound per head of the population.

The burden of taxation in Poland has been borne with courage, and in the main without grudging. Too big a portion of it has had to go for purposes of national defence, but experience has shown that there was no alternative. It should be said that a great deal of useful work for the civilian population has been done all over the country from the army budget. If this burden of taxation has not provoked serious objection, it has been because of the mounting confidence the nation has felt in its leaders. Premier Prystor had the heavy task during the hard years of saving things by the stern use of the "axe". To Minister Kwiatkowski has fallen the more grateful task of planning and carrying through the process of recovery and expansion. The foundations had been well and truly laid by Grabski to whom Poland owes a banking system which has been a true pillar of the structure of national confidence.

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One special feature of Poland's financial policy deserves a word of attention; the maintenance of the gold standard, when Britain and later the U.S.A. left it for what is known as the sterling bloc. I described already the feeling that the zloty was instituted in 1924 on too high a level, and how it fell by two-fifths to be stabilised at that point. The curious fact is that this makes its parity with the sterling system precisely what it was with gold at the start.

Around the refusal to join the sterling bloc there has

waged a great controversy. In favour of so doing one has the great argument of all exporters, particularly of manufactured articles. Producing on a high level of cost, they have to compete in world markets with lands producing on a lower level. This puts them at a marked disadvantage, and does mean at times the loss of markets entirely.

—Against the change there are several arguments, some of them decisive. To the industrialist, the reply is, that he may get less for his goods, but he also pays less in zlotys for all raw materials imported from abroad and necessary for his purposes. In general, the bill for all imports is much less than it would be with a depreciated zloty. Even where articles are manufactured from domestic raw materials, the lower scale of wages paid in Poland should help the industrialist to survive.

The telling considerations against depreciating the zloty were psychological. Keeping it unchanged was the surest way to protect a most valuable social asset—the instinct for thrift, and the readiness to save, in the nation. All inflation disturbs confidence. No one can know where it will stop, and a flight from the home currency is almost unavoidable. (Of this we have a good example in France). The resolve not to inflate the zloty has cost Poland a good deal, but since the strict measures taken to control the export of zlotys from the country in April 1936 the situation has been remarkably improved.¹ In particular the savings of the Polish people, even in the depression years, have gone up by leaps and bounds. The general figures at the end of each year in millions of zlotys are as follows:

	1935	1936	1937
State Banks	382.8	485.2	673.9
Private Banks	462.3	466.0	556.2
Post Office Savings	881.7	895.7	1037.4
Communal Savings	711.3	720.5	829.0
Co-operatives	265.4	263.0	281.0
Totals	2703.5	2830.4	3378.4

¹ These measures were forced on Poland by the drain of funds taken by emigrants, e.g. to Palestine: which were totalling hundreds of millions of zlotys.

It is notable that the rise in 1937 alone has been five hundred millions.

These are considerable sums for a poor nation, representing an amount well over the budget for one year. Rightly put to work, they can render untold help in consolidating and developing every kind of useful enterprise, and raising the whole standard of living. Every savings-bank book (and the number is very large) represents the stake the citizen concerned has in the country, and is a factor making for stability.

But still another service to Poland has come from the maintenance of the gold standard for the zloty. The appearance of the National Debt has been transformed. Formerly it was almost wholly a foreign debt—owed chiefly to the U.S.A., but this is true no longer. The rise of the sterling block *ipso facto* cut Poland's debt abroad by two fifths. The positions is shown by these figures:

	1928	1932	1936
National Debt	4.161	5.029	4.660
Domestic	299	459	1.739
Foreign	3.862	4.570	2.921

The year 1937 shows further reduction of the Foreign Debt (apart from the new French loans), and an increase at home. As a general remark, it may be said that the Polish debt total is extraordinary low. In 1936 it was 136 zlotys per head of the population; while that of Denmark was 425, that of Switzerland 1094, that of Holland 1397, that of France 4248, and that of the U.K. 4419 zlotys per head. These differences are astounding.

Polish finance is, both potentially and actually, in what can only be called a healthy position. True, the reserves of gold or its equivalent, in the cellars of the National Bank, are not large. From well over a thousand millions at the highest, they sank to one-third of that sum in the bad years, and had only recovered to about four hundred and fifty million zlotys by the end of 1938. However, the old view that economic strength was to be measured by the gold coverage on hand has long since been exploded.

Soundness of financial methods, elasticity of circulation, and the productive employment of skilled and unskilled labour, are among the factors that have taken its place.

Trade and Industry

"The first business of man is to live" was a wise word of the great American teacher Sumner of Yale. One might add the phrase "live well", and then the story of human ambitions would seem to be complete.

Judged by twentieth century standards, the Poles have never lived well as a national group. Even to-day a fraction of the population is neither adequately housed, nor properly fed, nor regularly employed. As a result the demands of health are far from truly met, and the aspirations of the mind and the spirit are far from satisfied. While admitting all this, we may still declare that things are better now than they've ever been before. What is more, the trend is upward, and given peace, it can have every hope of continuing so.

We have seen above in what ways the proper balance of economic life was awry in 1919, and what some of the difficulties were on the path which consolidation and improvement. Perhaps the greatest need of every country in eastern Europe has been to raise the level of the purchasing power of its own people, and thus to consolidate home markets. The gains from such a step are obvious to all, and they have the great merit of profiting everyone.

Hat der Bauer Geld
Hat's die ganze Welt,

is a sound German proverb. If the Polish farmer gets more for his produce he will spend more. Thus will trade be strengthened, industry will flourish and the pay envelope be good.

Scarcely less important however, is the improving of export trade. For this two things are necessary. One must have access to markets by sea and land, and the winning

of these takes time. Further, one must offer a range of wares that will be esteemed and be sought after by the foreign consumer. In both these respects Poland has stood the test, and progress to-day is unquestioned. During the years when over-production (sic) was universal, the competition for markets was keen, and all surplus stocks were a burden. Even a good harvest was a problem, rather than a cause for rejoicing. But that condition of things is now past. Either times are better or there is at least the will to spend where it was lacking before.

From all this Poland profits. Not only has she sold well of late, but she has been confidently increasing her buying. The figures in millions of zlotys are as follows:

	Import	Export
1929 (all high)	3,111	2,813
1931	1,468	1,879
1934 (all low)	799	975
1936	1,003	1,026
1937	1,254	1,195
1938	1,299	1,184

The catastrophic fall of both exports and imports in hard years was the same in every country in the world. Poland's recovery has been steady though not sensational. A welcome feature of it has been the marked increase in the number of countries with which she is trading: better said a much safer distribution of her foreign trade over all the continents. Poland has stoutly resisted the designs of any one Power to obtain a monopoly of her exports or her imports. For a number of reasons such a monopoly is dangerous, and should never be accepted unless under compulsion. Her exports to the U.K. were back in 1937 where they had been in 1928, and were now nearly one-fifth of the total export: to Germany they were one-fifth of the export of 1928, and one-seventh of the total export. To U.S.A. they were four times the total of 1928, and one-twelfth of all Polish export. In recent years foreign trade has gone up in striking fashion with Roumania, Sweden, Switzerland and Italy, not to mention India, Japan and the countries of South America.

In order to protect the zloty imports have been carefully watched of late, but they too have shown the same tendencies. In 1937 they were less than one-fifth of the 1928 figures from Germany, just under half of those same figures from the U.K. and one-third of what they were from the U.S.A. Since 1936 they are almost uniformly on the increase, and from about fifty different countries. By now four-fifths of all foreign trade goes by the sea route via Danzig and Gdynia. Hence the vital significance of this channel for the national economy.

Turning to home industry the picture is certainly encouraging. In the field of agriculture only a few figures can be given. The income per hectare of cultivated ground in 1934-35 was 68 zlotys, in 1936-37-121 zlotys. This was due in good part to better prices. The total return per homestead from all sources rose in those same three years from 994 zlotys to 1658 zlotys.

The exports of bacon and tinned ham are worth noting. Bacon was sold in 1928 to the value of two millions, in 1936 to the value of forty-six millions. Tinned hams are a new commodity, but they have met with a warm welcome. Two thousand tons were exported in 1934, 19,000 in 1937. Behind this lie of course the live stock quotas for the Polish countryside of which these samples:

	1933	1937
Horned cattle	9,000,000	10,230,000
Pigs	5,770,000	7,420,000
Sheep	2,550,000	3,160,000

In view of this improvement in the purchasing power of the primary producer, one is not surprised to learn that the consumption of wheat for bread, rose from an average in 1923-27 of about one hundred pounds per head to about 150 pounds in 1923-34. It is still one of the lowest in Europe, its place being taken for the masses by rye.

In the field of heavy industries the rate of recovery has been mostly good. Hard hit by the depression these branches took the opportunity completely to reorganise their internal economy, and with good results. Coal, pig

iron and steel had dropped and risen again as illustrated below:

	1928 tons	1933 tons	1937 tons
Coal	46,000,000	27,000,000	36,000,000
Pig iron	1,000,000	306,000	724,000
Steel	1,677,000	833,000	1,451,000

Even more satisfying than this rise in production has been the greater rise in the domestic consumption, not only of these but of many other manufactured commodities.

The range of new industries opened up in the last decade is impressive. Among them the main fields are chemical products such as fertilizer and artificial silk, and a wide variety of production in the electrical field. In both branches almost nothing had been done, and the need was immense. Each one of them renders special services in agriculture and in cousin industries, and thus does a general service to the whole economic front. A single sample of figures. Potash salts for the fields reached 342,000 tons in 1928, but had not only recovered from the depression, but gone to 521,000 in 1937.

The needs of national defence have played a large part in industrial development in recent years in Poland. The government which means the country itself, has become an important client and consumer; but it has also become one of the major producers. This brings us to the vexed question of the intervention of state enterprise in the field of industrial production, so as to compete with private initiative. Here too a heated controversy has gone on for a long time, and has not ended yet. Industrial leaders who have been long in the field, say that they have a real grievance in this respect, and no one can deny that state intervention puts them at a disadvantage.

For twenty years their bogey has been the lack of capital to work with, of credits with which to buy raw materials from abroad. These credits were easy enough to obtain in pre-war days, but Poland has been haunted by the lack

of liquid assets more than by anything else. The normal thing would be to look to the banks, but for years the banks had almost no funds. Then came the founding of the Polish bank, the National Economic Bank, the Agrarian Bank, and the Savings Banks, all of which have tended to crowd the private institutions out of the picture. The lion's share of accumulated savings go to them, and have been mostly used to develop business and industry in one way and another. State enterprises have as a rule been able to get loans and credits easier than private firms—at least this is the charge preferred. This has discouraged those already engaged in industry, and has stood in the way of many others who would have come in under more favourable conditions.

The whole question of the dimensions and working of foreign capital in Poland has been well set forth by Mr. Leopold Wellisz in his book published last autumn. We have seen how the public loans i.e. the foreign debt of Poland has been notably reduced in recent years. The same process has gone on, almost without exception in private enterprise, the proportion of native Polish capital to foreign being steadily on the increase. At its height in 1929 foreign capital in Poland totalled about £200,000,000 and was found in 446 out of just over 1100 joint stock companies. In all Polish corporations it provided 38.4 per cent of the assets, in the larger firms it was over half.

Various kinds of investment are found. Loans to Mortgage Credit institutions and to Banks, which are far below what they were before the crisis: loans, i.e. credits to private enterprises of all kinds, which were above £75,000,000 in 1929, but down to about £46,000,000 in 1935: goods credits, which were once above £40,000,000 but have since been almost wiped out: and capital invested in Polish enterprises. This last actually rose from about £45,000,000 in 1928 to nearly £70,000,000 in 1933; only to decline steadily since then. Much the largest part of this is in joint stock companies; in which the Polish well-to-do have not yet learned to invest as do their western neighbours. In this respect, however, a change is at hand. The countries

most represented by Polish investments are France, the U.S.A., Germany and Belgium, with Switzerland and the United Kingdom next on the list. In Chapter IV Wellisz surveys the Openings in Poland for further investment, a subject on which a good deal is said in different places in the present book.

At the time of her liberation Poland did not have on her soil a single plant for the production of any of the modern weapons for offensive or defensive war, or for the production of munitions. All these had to be created, and only state enterprise could venture on this. In general the newer industries connected with the use of the internal combustion engine, were unknown on Polish soil, and have all had to be inaugurated. Some of them, such as the making of motor-cars and 'buses, are now being carried on by private firms, others belong to the state. There is a famous plant at Chorzow in Silesia, built by the Germans in war-time, which produces fertilizers under normal conditions, but can quickly be turned to the production of high explosives. Poland's needs are so great in both these respects, that a second plant has been built, this time in the heart of the country, and named after the President—a renowned specialist in such things. Here the takings of nitrates from the air has been brought to a state of perfection that has attracted the attention of the whole world.

Private industry looked on all such competition as something obnoxious. There were grey-haired veterans who were compelled to give up the fight. Others, younger men, sold out their holdings, by way of protest, and retired—to collect stamps! They had been subjected from the start to controls never exercised in pre-war days: hours of work, conditions of labour, wages paid, prices demanded—all these were now subject to the scrutiny of the government. In addition they were compelled to pay regular sums into Social Insurance schemes, such as old age pensions and sick benefit, which they felt were beyond the powers of their business to carry. Of course they organised, for various kinds of defiance; but the government came down a few years back on the trusts (cartels), broke them

up, and reduced the prices of certain articles of general need, which the poorer classes had not been able to buy.

Industrial leaders saw a contradiction between the way they were being treated, and the rising conviction in the country that an expanding industry was the gravest need of the time. Only so could a measure of that self-sufficiency be achieved, which has become the idol of modern statecraft; and only in this way could the growth of urban population of Poland be promoted, a goal that is felt to be indispensable for the proper balancing of economic and cultural life. Why then, say the captains of industry, are you so hard on us? We should like to produce goods, and to employ more labour, but we cannot.¹

Finance Minister Kwiatkowski has borne the brunt of this attack, though he is far from being an enemy of private enterprise. The truth is that industry has not been so badly off as reported, though it has made far less profits than in the "piracy" days of a generation ago. *Laissez faire* is over, and the exploitation of man-power practised of old is not allowed now. Kwiatkowski has only gone ahead with state-owned industry where it was unavoidable; and he can rightly reproach many industrialists with wanting to have everything made easy for them. Negotiations have led to a gentleman's agreement, by which industry will get all the help the state can give to expand its activities; while the state will refrain from entering the ordinary line of enterprise, confining itself to what may be called super-projects, which involve the well-being of the nation itself. Many state-owned plants, are to be transformed into private companies by the issuing of shares, which the public will be able to buy in the open market. In some cases the present management will continue, in order to ensure efficiency.

By super-projects are meant such things as the building of Gdynia, the Central Industrial Region development, or

¹ The unemployment problem has not yet been solved in Poland. A useful step was taken in 1935 by the creation of a Labour Fund, to promote public works, and especially to put younger unemployed to work. Cf. Buell, p. 153.

—what is bound to come up one day—the draining of the Marshlands in the east. Here would also be included certain key industries connected with national defence. This by no means excludes the sharing of these fields by private firms. It is on these lines that Poland is now proceeding, and with all sails set.

The Central Industrial Region

To what has been said of this colossal scheme previously a few sentences may be added here. It is destined to become an integral part of the national peace economy, and the last stronghold of defence in case Poland is turned into an armed camp. Both material ends and social consolidation are being furthered in what has been an area of discouragement and want. The rivers are being regulated and power plants erected on them. Land is being reclaimed, roads and railways multiplied, and industrial plants are going up on all sides—some of them hidden away in the forests, and so hard to find. Gas and electricity are being brought in, where they were unknown before. What have been struggling towns and villages are humming with life to-day. The cost of all this is being met partly by the budget, partly by loans, and partly by the communities themselves. A notable feature is the settling here of a number of new private enterprises of different kinds.

A recent Polish visitor, who was in the district for the fifth time, has written a glowing account of all he saw—some things are shown to no one! Fifteen new railway stations, ten thousand new living quarters, high-power transmission lines all around, and miles of piping for natural gas. In one space of two square miles a huge factory for explosives is going up, with a hundred production sheds and thirty-five others subsidiary, with twenty miles of steam-heating, and fifteen of lighted streets. Not far away is the big steel plant, Stalowa Wola, with a new blast furnace, a rolling mill and a tool foundry—all built in twelve months. So the task goes on. This sort of thing used to be associated with the U.S.A., or more recently

with Soviet Russia. To-day the Poles are showing that they can do it also.

Social Welfare

It is time now to say something about Poland's aspirations and achievements in the field of Social Legislation, and in the parallel one of Social Services. The theme, like others broached, is a vast one, and only significant matters can be touched on. For an obvious reason the services must get mention first; for a great deal of social work was being done in pre-war days before any government was in existence to tackle the task of legislation.

We must be fair and record the fact that in both Prussia and Austria millions of Poles profited from and shared the official advances made from the eighties of last century, notably in respect to social insurance. We know how efficient were the Polish self-help organisations, both economic and cultural, in Poznan long before there was a free Poland. In the Austrian provinces things were less advanced, though here too Communal Savings Banks, sick benefit, and provision for old-age pensions did exist. As for the central areas, apart from certain fine things to be seen in Warsaw and a few larger centres—the Lodzh Fire Brigade, with its self-help agencies, should be noted, almost nothing had been done. Here, however, there was a good deal of private insurance, mostly with English companies, whose headquarters were in Russia. As a result, all accumulated assets were lost in the revolution, and the policy-holders have never recovered anything. The same was true of the huge sums paid in by workers in Prussian lands and in Austria into state institutions; whose old age benefits went by the board in the inflation. Until after 1905 nothing could be done under the Tsarist regime at all, to organise social amenities at all.

The one thing that did exist here, which was of great service, and is of interest to English readers, were the Co-operatives. Nothing better has been devised by man to serve farming communities of the peasant proprietor

type than this movement. It teaches the lesson of togetherness. It prevents exploitation by petty traders. It encourages thrift, and can extend needed credits to poor farmers in the pre-harvest period. Finally, by organising collective buying for consumers and collective selling for producers, it can ensure the farmer of something like a square deal. The pestilential chain of middle-men is eliminated, and the baby and the bottle got together for the good of both. All this, however, on one condition: the management must be competent, and it must be honest. For these reasons, the fear and dislike of the Jews for the Co-operative Movement is universal. It stops usury, which has been their chief source of well-being.

The idea was tried out in Poland already in the 18th century, but it was first made operative when the Schultz Delitsch Credit Banks made their appearance in Prussian Poland in the sixties. The "co-op" as a retail trading instrument came in somewhat later, and existed locally in Russian Poland for some time before 1905. Only after the change for more liberal conditions came at that time could large-scale organisation be effected; and this was done by the man who was later to be President of Poland from 1922-26, Stanislas Wojciechowski. A congress of Food Supplying Associations finally met in Warsaw in 1908, and a Union was founded, by the name of *Spolem*. Parallel societies were also in the process of formation, one of dairymen, another of grain-growers, all of which were extending their work when the storm of 1914-15 broke, and they were interrupted by war. What survived was almost swept away by the post-war inflation, and a fresh start had to be made. Fortunately, the institution had proved its worth, and resolute people were found to take up the task. Three major groups emerged: the Union of Agricultural Co-operatives, the Union of Co-operative Associations, and the Union of Food Supplying Associations. The first was largely a farmers' marketing enterprise, the second mainly a Credit Association, while the third was a wholesale buying and selling agency, doing business abroad as well.

Late in the twenties, when times were good, there were signs of malpractices, and a complete reorganisation was necessary. Then came the depression years, which tested the whole structure; but it has survived, and is doing good work to-day. The scale of this work is still far from what it might be, owing in part to lack of skill and vision in the leadership. It is significant that the Polish organisations have been outstripped in some ways by their Ukrainian neighbours, from whom they can learn useful lessons. In 1936 the number of societies of all kinds was just 12,000, of these 7,200 Polish, and 3,270 Ukrainian. (The Germans and Jews have their own organisations.) The total membership reported was 2,800,000, of which about 2,000,000 were Poles, and 600,000 Ukrainians. These figures are impressive, as are also the business turnovers, the credits given, and the savings deposits, but they might and should be much larger. Party politics again are partly to blame. What is needed is more consolidation, and better service. Poland has more societies than any other country in Europe—only Italy approaching her; but the inner quality of the work done is still far from the best.

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Every sample of social services known can be found in the new commonwealth, but many of them are still in swaddling clothes. In the larger centres they operate well; what is badly needed is their extension to the isolated areas of the country-side. Mention can be made only of one or two—and first of what pertains to health.

No one can visit the Medical Aid Centres of the capital and not come away enthusiastic about what he sees there. Everyone can benefit from them—infants, growing children, expectant mothers, the aged and the infirm. The same is true of the Sick Benefit Houses of Cracow and Lwow. Similar praise is to be given to the hospitals, whose supervision, nursing and surgery services are of the highest calibre. What is more, by contrast with England, the family of average income can get anything done—even to major operations, at a cost within their means. True, there are

too few hospitals, and they are nearly always over-crowded ; but the reason is that many smaller towns have no hospitals or clinics, and the rural communities of the less developed provinces have as yet scarcely any medical supervision at all. The total number of doctors in Poland in 1935 was 12,400, and of these nearly 3,000 were in Warsaw—a city of 1,100,000 people. This meant 3.7 doctors per 10,000 inhabitants, as against 7.7 in Denmark, 6.1 in France, or 7.4 in Germany. The larger towns had 16.8 per 10,000 while the rural districts had only one tenth as many ! In the matter of hospitals Poland had 21 beds per 10,000 inhabitants, while Hungary had 52, and Germany 97. Here is a great challenge to Polish medicine, and one that must be taken up without delay.

This picture, though dark, need not call forth adverse judgments on the part of outsiders, or despair in those trying to face its implications. One must realise the terrible condition things were in twenty years ago, in order to see how much has already been done. The health conditions of the masses have vastly improved, of which the decrease in infant mortality and of deaths in child-birth are sufficient proof. Typhus averaged 23,000 cases yearly between 1921–25, but was down to 3,500 in 1937 ; malaria in the same time was down from 16,000 cases to 309. The death rate per 1,000 inhabitants for the whole nation dropped from an average of 18.5 in 1921–25 to 14.6 ten years later. It had been as high as 25 before 1900.

Nevertheless the ravages of tuberculosis, of diphtheria and of scarlet fever have not decreased much, and the fine new sanatoriums now to be found in Polish Silesia must soon be extended to the great open spaces of the east. The one obstacle is lack of means. A hopeful sign is the increased supervision of health in the schools, and the resolute campaign among youth everywhere on the lines of “preventive medicine.” A study of the fitness of the 300,000 recruits trained yearly in the Polish army will suffice to dispel the doubts of any who see things blackly. At bottom the problem is quite as much one of popular education as of the extension of facilities for treatment.

Social Legislation

Turning now to Social Legislation, we find a situation that is gratifying, but has not always taken account of the means for realisation. What of old had been done by private initiative, and on a small scale, was now made a public charge, and meant to be universally effective. The great desiderata of health supervision, of proper feeding for the masses, of reasonable hours and conditions of labour in industry, of provision for sick relief, for old-age pensions and unemployment allowances, went beyond the available resources, even in good times; and was bound to come down in a crash in depression years. Actually it survived, but in straitened form, and was mostly the better for the experience. A few general considerations will show the nature of the inheritance from the past, the magnitude of the problem, and the efforts to solve it.

Few things could be worse than the chaos of labour conditions obtaining in Polish lands in pre-war days. Hundreds of thousands left their homes in early spring for the German world to the west, to earn what they could and return in the autumn to eke out existence through the winter. The atmosphere of such undertakings was about as bad as could be imagined. In the textile centres of the Russian provinces—Lodz, Bialystok, etc., the wildest of *laissez faire* anarchy prevailed. A vivid, and not unfair picture of it all can be found in Reymont's tale "The Promised Land". Even in the heavy industry areas of the south-west—on the Prussian side it was better than on the Russian, the exploitation of the workers was general. Small wonder that the Poles were resolved to change this under the new order; and to replace the cold impersonalism of 19th century relations by something that would take account of "hands" as human beings, and as ranking citizens in the community. An end of the "coolee" mentality of employers! Even had they not been so disposed, the influences both east and west, in Soviet Russia and in

Social Democratic Germany, would have compelled a new deal at home.

From the start Poland was a loyal member of the I.L.O., and in the immediate post-war years her Diet ratified as many as thirteen international conventions dealing with Labour, and the conditions of the workers. These covered a number of fields: child-labour, unemployment, accident insurance, holidays in industry, etc. Some of them related to mine and foundry, others to the agricultural sphere. But more important than such ratifications, was the introduction in 1919 of something that was to be extended and made more effective as time went on, viz. a proper system of state inspection of all plants and factories, with the consequent uncovering of no end of unpermissible dealings and situations. With this went the right and the duty of these state employees to intervene in cases of strikes or lock-outs, and the power to compel the acceptance of state control over wages, prices, etc. Non-co-operation on the part of the owner might mean the closing of his premises. No one will claim that anything like all that was set down on paper was realised in action, but the fact remains that Poland has steadily reduced the losses from labour disputes through the years, and has escaped the serious upheavals experienced by other large countries in Europe.

Working hours have been brought down in every field. Women are no longer allowed in certain industries, nor allowed to work at night. Child-labour is done away with, except in the "cottage" workshops, which are illegal, and where it cannot always be detected. The right of the workmen to collective bargaining is admitted everywhere, as a result of which the status of the Trades Unions is firm. These latter had a paltry 90,000 members in the Prussian and Austrian industrial areas in 1914. By 1922 they numbered ten times as many. Their registered membership in 1932 was 913,000, in 1935 941,000; with about two-thirds of these paying their fees. As elsewhere politics has split up the Trades Unions into various groups, so that their effectiveness is somewhat lessened, but they will not learn the lesson as yet. The strongest single Union is

that of government and local government employees, of whom nearly 200,000 were paid up members.

The data on strikes are instructive. They show that the workers are by no means content even to-day with existing conditions; but they also show that something is being done to meet their demands. In 1928, when prosperity was at its height, there were 769 strikes. In 1935 the number was 1,165, in 1937 2,074—nearly a three-fold rise. But the number of days lost to the workers was only up in nine years by one-sixth: 2,781,000 in 1928 and 3,288,000 in 1937. That indicates a greatly increased skill in getting at settlements, and assumes a measure of goodwill on both sides, to meet the demands of the arbitrators. In 1928 there were 5 lock-outs, in 1937 12. The days lost in the former were 79,000, in the latter only 18,000. The losses from strikes are still too high, being greater in Poland in 1937 than in the much vaster industrial world of the United Kingdom; but the proof of signal improvement is there.

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This brief sketch gives a far from adequate picture of the general situation in respect of work and its rewards in Poland, but it shows in what direction things are moving. One of the undoubted features of the whole twenty-year period has been the understanding shown by those in high office for the lot of the worker, and the obvious determination to arrive at a large measure of social justice for all concerned. No finer example of this can be found than the present incumbent of the Home Office, M. Zyndram-Koscalkowski. Firmness without severity has been his motto, fairness to all parties his ideal. One guiding principle is always in front: the good of the nation and state as a whole must come before that of any class or group!

For this reason Poland is regarded by observers of the Left, notably by her Soviet neighbours, as a reactionary capitalist country; while some champions of the old order, in particular foreign firms engaged in industry there, criticise Poland as the incarnation of state socialism. This is surely a good sign, an indication that something like the middle

way is being taken, with an avoidance of pit-falls on either side.

The rural areas, many of them far from the railway and socially isolated, still present the major problem; but it has been made clear that much has already been done. "No one", wrote Professor Heydel of Cracow five years ago, "who has seen in the villages of what used to be Russia, schools, fire brigades, co-operative stores, newspapers, bicycles and radio-sets, who has heard the singing of the youth—no matter of what political persuasions, and compares this with the dull and dead blankness of pre-war years, can fail to realise that history has at last begun to plough up that deadness!"

In other words, a new Poland is on the way, and with results that can only be beneficial for all Europe.

CHAPTER XII

MIND AND SPIRIT

LIKE other lands of Central Europe Poland has for centuries been studded with churches. East of the Vistula they are fewer, because settlements are farther apart. They are found everywhere in town and country, symbols of earth's interest in things unseen. To-day, those same wide-open spaces are being sown with schools. Too long the Polish people have been without these admittedly necessary institutions, and the resolve of to-day is to catch up with the past. An attempt to appraise the meaning of these two factors—religion and education, for any people in a few pages, is almost a mad enterprise, but something at least can be said which may be useful to complete the picture of modern Poland.

First then, as to religion. The popular conception that peasant peoples are naturally pious has some justification. Their contacts with nature do two things: keep them alive to the mystery of life, and teach them to bow to powers that are stronger than themselves. Though usually friendly, nature can also be brutal. No finer picture of the working of these forces could be desired than Reymont's masterpiece "The Polish Peasants." It is arguable that people of this kind find in the poetry and the teachings of Catholicism guidance and comfort, precisely of the sort they need. Few things are finer than the relaxation existing between a simple, hard-working village people, and the true shepherd of souls—the parish priest. Of course, the difficulty arises when that shepherd is not worthy of his calling; but when he is we are near to the place and the time—

“In which the burden and the weary weight
Of all our unintelligible world
Is lightened.”

When we come to the towns, the influence of money on the one hand and of socialism on the other, tend often to rob people of their fineness of texture. It is largely the Church's own fault that socialism has come to have such a grip on the workers of Europe. This applies to Protestantism almost more than to the Mother Church. The clergy talked too much of saving souls for the next world, and they have connived too far in the efforts made by the Altar and the Throne to maintain a class society, and to keep the masses “where they belong”. Right here the modern school, the press and other agencies, have done effectual work, and the church is at last waking up to its true responsibilities.

No one who has met with only indifference or hatred in men will believe easily in the love of God. There is, then, a battle going on, which the churches can certainly win, but only if they live up to the Gospel they proclaim. Catholicism had the whip hand in pre-war days, since it could be identified very largely with patriotism. It had also a social significance, e.g. in the Prussian provinces. Since Marxian socialism was offered to the Polish workman in Germany, loyal Catholics could organise Trade Unions for the Poles alone, and so escape the dangers of Social Democracy. These became pillars of economic and cultural self-help under the old order.

Perhaps the real problem for the Church lies in the constantly growing ranks of the Intelligentsia. In one-time Prussia Catholics were disciplined by the pressure upon them of the Lutheran majority. In the Central Provinces, under Tsarist rule, something of the same sort was felt, though far less effective, from official Orthodoxy. In Austria, Catholicism was in the saddle, and so was taken for granted. Right here lay the snare, for the form of things could easily prevail with less robustness of content. Everywhere in pre-war times the identification of his faith and his love of country was a very real thing to the Pole,

but it certainly did confuse things that were better kept apart. Since the land is free, religion must stand on its own feet and a real distinction is arising between the claims of the Faith on the one hand, and the Commonwealth on the other.

Actually this is not quite as true as it looks. With Communism being made into a mystical religion on the east, and with the semi-pagan Nazi crusading on the west, Poland remains as before a kind of stronghold of Christian belief and tradition. This is good, provided that the Christian faith and not some special brand of it is proclaimed—the enemy is denominationalism.

Polish Catholicism in its official form is tempted to claim for itself a sort of monopoly of the Faith, the right to dictate to all Christians in the country what they are to think and do. (We have noted already the use made of this in regard to some Orthodox communities.) I have heard this view strongly put by leading Protestants, to whom it seems as if the more militant part of Catholicism wanted to thrust them on one side, keep them from playing an integral part in the national life, and even suggest that, after all, to be a really good Pole you must be a Catholic. This does not mean that anything like persecution is admitted as a part of the policy either of church or of state; but only that an excessive zeal on the part of some clergy and of many narrow-minded lay people results in words and deeds that cannot be called tolerance. A special example of this is to be found among the Uniate church clergy in the south-east, who have been guilty more than once of inciting their people against Dissenters—chiefly Presbyterian groups, served in many cases by pastors sent from the New World. It is fair to say that samples of this kind of thing are found only among ignorant people, and have been dealt with promptly by the police wherever discovered.

Among educated Catholic people there are to be found three fairly distinct groups:

(i) Those whose connection with the Church is only formal or nominal, the number of whom is said to be growing. The clergy refer to these people as “indifferent,”

and puts down their existence to the powerful secularising tendencies of science, business, and other forces. My own feeling is that the number of these people is not as great as is charged.

(ii) Those who "believe", to whom religion is a personal reality, but who are not captivated by institutional Christianity. They rarely go to church, and the confessional and the sacraments have little or no meaning for them. Of these, the number is relatively large. They are interested in deeds rather than in dogmas, and they can usually be found carrying more than their share of the burden of service to their fellows. If questioned closely, they would announce themselves enemies of clericalism, insisting on the right and the duty of the layman to share in the spiritual guidance of the nation.

(iii) Those who "practice". For them the church is their spiritual home. They go regularly to the Communion and the Confessional, and the counsels of the clergy are the deciding factor in their lives. Among these devout people can be found both highly intellectual men and women and still more of those who rarely use their minds at all. Here too will be found zealous workers for social causes, while many others live their lives apart, and love God rather than their neighbours.

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All churches in Poland are established in this sense, that all have the material support of the state, and that all the clergy are counted as public officials. Roman Catholicism has the favoured position—recognised officially as being far the largest; but beyond this act of courtesy there is no respect of persons. All efforts of ardent Catholics after the war, to get the schools made subject to the clergy, were bound to fail. The school system is secular, but religion is taught at appointed hours every week by trained teachers—mostly ordained men. In the schools all the clergy of every denomination are on equal footing. The President of the Republic is likely always to be a Catholic, but no rule provides for this. High office in the state has already

been held by many Protestants, and there is no prospect that things will be any different in the future.

The status of Roman Catholicism is defined in the Concordat of August 2, 1925. It provided for twenty dioceses, each with its own bishop. The Uniate church has three separate dioceses, and the small Armenian Catholic group has its own Archbishop in Lwow. This city is in the curious position—unique in Europe, of having three archbishops, one for each of the “rites” mentioned. In 1925 Roman Catholicism counted about 7,000 parishes. The number is now somewhat more.

The composition of Protestantism is somewhat mixed. The vast majority are Lutherans, a relatively small number are Calvinists, and there are a few communities of Baptists and Methodists. Among the largest church, internal difficulties arise from the fact that over half the Lutherans of Poland are German by extraction and speech, a good many of them German in patriotism. Relations in this field were certainly getting better until the resurgence of nationalism led by the Nazis came along; since when much friction has resulted. I can say from personal knowledge that the Polish church leaders have shown a vast amount of patience with this “revival”, and time should remove the worst risks of conflict.

Out of several pre-war administrative units—there were three in the Austrian provinces alone, a single Lutheran Communion has been evolved, with its “Bishop” in Warsaw. After long negotiations the status of the Church was defined by Act of Parliament in 1937. There is a single Faculty of Theology serving all Evangelical bodies, in the university of Warsaw; where, for the first time since Reformation days, candidates for the ministry are trained for their work in their own mother-tongue.

The status of the Orthodox Church in Poland, which is an independent unit, was finally settled in 1938. As we saw, there are about 4,000,000 communicants, almost entirely non-Polish. This body has its seminary in the capital for the training of its priests, and is fast winning for itself the status of a national church. The number of

dioceses is five, the number of parishes in 1925 was about 1,500. In the past the term "Orthodox Pole" would have been thought a contradiction—so rarely were such to be found; but this is no longer the case, and it will be a distinct gain for the new commonwealth as this important spiritual community comes more and more to function as an independent church organisation and communion.

Both Catholicism and Orthodoxy have their own Orders—for women as well as men. In 1925 there were seventeen Orthodox monasteries, the number of Catholic ones being far larger. Some of the Catholic Orders have made themselves a great name in the fields of teaching and of social service. The Ursulines and the Felician Sisters have middle schools that are famous all over the country. In the same way the Jesuits and the Piarists contribute something of distinction to education. But the service of women as nursing sisters, and of certain men's Orders in work for the poor and outcast is no less notable. A striking example was set to the last generation by the promising painter, Adam Chmielowski, who forsook his lifework for the service of the poor lads of the city streets, became a Franciscan, and founded a group under his new name, Brother Albert, whose business it would be to practise the communism of the early church members, and set the rich an example of sharing with the poor. It is this kind of thing that makes the Christian Church the true Kingdom of God on earth.

Under pre-war conditions the churches in Poland were at the grave disadvantage of having leaders thrust on them too often for political reasons. Things are better now and should improve as time heals wounds. Among the Catholic Bishops to-day, whose Primate is Archbishop Hlond, the only Polish Cardinal, are some of the finest men in the country. Under their guidance the choosing and training of the candidates for Holy Orders is something totally different from what it was twenty-five years ago. Not only do they learn the truth of the gospel, but they are also schooled in ways of presenting it to the modern world.

A special feature of Home Missions is the *Action Catholique*; whose task is of growing importance as the anti-Christianity pressure grows all around Poland.

One has only to be present at Mass in a beautiful parish church like St. Wojciech's in Poznan, or the Franciscan Church in Cracow, or in any one of a thousand small towns and villages, to feel the dynamic of the Faith for the simple people. Better still would be a visit to the great Shrine of Our Lady of Czenstochowa, or the scarcely less famous seat of Our Lady of Ostrabrama in Wilno, when the throngs gather from far and near on the great Feast Days of the year. The same could be said for Calvary near Cracow, or the ancient Silesia shrine of Piekary. The Polish nation is devout by nature and by tradition: from this devotion springs a peculiar power.

The Schools

And now of the schools. In this field the conditions obtaining in pre-war days were tragic. In the Prussian provinces all schools were German by law, and there was a minimum of illiteracy. In Russia such schools as existed were Russian; though private Polish schools were permitted, and some famous ones could be found in the large cities. But the masses of the people could neither read nor write. In the Austrian provinces the schools had been Polish for about fifty years, but for half of that time the classes had been curiously averse to popular education. Add to this the poverty prevailing, and one can realise why too little was done. Here, however, were the two Polish universities—Cracow and Lwow, which stood on a level with the best institutions of Central Europe, whether for scientific work or for teaching as such.

The new era began in Polish education, when the German armies of occupation permitted the Poles to begin the organising of their own schools. Little could be done under war conditions, but at least the plans were worked out which could be put into practice a few years later. Literally everything had to be found: buildings, equipment,

books, teachers, and the means to finance them all. Of only one thing was there an abundance—children. They swarmed in tens of thousands, neglected in war years, and sadly needing a chance to learn. But progress was slow, since training institutions for teachers did not exist, nor were there sufficient people to man them. One should not forget that school-books in Polish were forbidden in large parts of the country, and frowned down on in still larger. Literally, as I said, every single thing had to be created, before a school-room and a teacher could be brought together to welcome a group of children.

In the summer of 1922 I had the opportunity of taking a group of American students to call on the Minister of Education. In his absence a deputy received us, and told us something about the beginnings of a state system of education in the new commonwealth. To a question put, he gave this answer, which I have never forgotten:

“Given peace, by 1942, we shall have a seat in school in Poland for every child of school age!”

That meant twenty years. It was a sober judgment, far different from many I have heard elsewhere. Taken with the work being done all the time with adults, it should mean an end of all illiteracy by 1942. What a transformation that would be!

The hope of achieving this end has been somewhat damped by the depression years. Entrenchment was unavoidable, for years no new schools could be built, and no new teachers trained. All plans have also been upset a little by the high birth rate, coupled with a distinct falling off of infant mortality—due to better health conditions everywhere. As a result the situation in many larger centres is still not much better than it was ten years ago in Warsaw: when many schools had morning and afternoon shifts, and, in some cases, were used for adult classes in the evening as well! There are still hundreds of communities whose school facilities are inadequate; in which old buildings are used, long since condemned, or rooms used that were not built for school purposes at all. But the encouraging thing is the pace with which, in recent years, all this

is being changed. The figures as to new school-rooms put into use since 1937 are astonishing.

And what fine buildings these new ones are ! It has been my good fortune to visit a good many, and there are no finer in Europe. Poland was fortunate in having scores of men and women return home after the war, who had been engaged in educational work in other lands, in both hemispheres. As a result, their help was available in getting all that was best in the newer equipment of popular education, adapted for Polish children. Only lack of means has hampered the Board of Education, but the way the local Boards of Lodzh, Warsaw and Katowice—which I have personally studied, have put their hand to this work has been most encouraging. Of course the novelty in Central Europe is the school with a playground ! These were unknown, and unwanted under the older order, but to-day everything has swung right the other way. On this theme a few sentences right here.

Perhaps the biggest single transformation effected in the past generation in the lives of 100,000,000 people living between the Baltic and the Adriatic is that the youth have been learning to play. In particular, as noted already, team games, whose educational value is untold. In this respect a great contribution was made in Poland right after the war by the Physical Directors of the Red Triangle—the American Y.M.C.A., who did much pioneering work with school-boys and girls, and whose example was followed with enthusiasm by Polish leaders. So far have things gone that fond parents, who never played a game in their lives, are disturbed to find their offspring—of both sexes, unable to tell them much about any lessons learned at school, but talking right through meal-time about the net-ball game won yesterday, or the swimming contest to be held to-morrow. Yes, swimming. The bigger schools have now their own pools, the pupils of smaller ones are taken regularly to the nearest public swimming centre.

One bit of statistics, salvaged by chance, might be given on this point. They cover the hard years, and the progress made since then is much more marked.

	1921	1935
Indoor Gymnasiums .	238	1046
Football Fields	380	976
Field Sports Tracks	302	496
Outdoor Pools	51	203
Indoor Pools .	7	14

These figures are general, the schools being only a part. Even this is but a beginning, but the effect is cumulative. Of course the need was appalling. So greatly was the American economist, Kemmerer, disturbed by the lack of understanding for the fitness of the physical man, that he gave a startling answer in 1927 just before leaving Poland to go home. Asked what he thought was the greatest need of the country, he answered:

“Six hundred golf courses!”

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As to the school system, it is simple. Elementary schools for all, irrespective of creed or speech. Of these the structure was changed in 1932-33, and greatly for the better. Before then the accepted German system had prevailed, which meant about four years in elementary school, followed by eight years in some type of Middle School. The great fault of this was that the boy or girl was put to a long course of years' work in a particular direction—classics, moderns or science, before he or she could have betrayed any real interest or talent. Once started, it was virtually impossible to change. The new plan lengthens the elementary school period, dividing the whole into two parts. The pupil now makes the transition at about fourteen, by which time he has some idea of what he would like to do, and do well. The Middle School's period is shortened, for those who go to the university, but special provision is made for a year or two of higher work for those who have teaching in the elementary schools in mind, before they go on to complete their preparation in the Training College. Those whose bent is practical are guided into the Trade Schools, whose growing number is one of the most welcome features of the new order. Of

old too much attention was given to "academic" subjects, with the over-loading of the professions as a result.

The new Poland has six universities—one of them Catholic on the style of Fribourg or Louvain. There are two big Schools of Engineering. Other higher institutions for Fine Arts, Agriculture, Commerce, etc., are well provided for. These institutions are self-governing bodies, though since 1933 the Ministry of Education has been given increase control over finance and policy. Here as in other fields work is hampered by too slender budgets, yet the amount of worthy achievement is impressive.

In 1925-26 the total number of students in schools of university status was 37,500; in 1936-37 it was 48,200. Of these 11,900 and 13,100 respectively were women. Something like this grand total is regarded as the optimum for the country under existing conditions. The students come literally from every class and every corner of the commonwealth. There are rich and poor, Pole and non-Pole, Christian and Jew. The last-named being ten per cent of the population, numbered twenty per cent of the student body in 1928-29. This disproportion was easily explained, but undesirable. As a result a limitation of Jewish admissions has been slowly effected, until in 1936-37 the percentage was just under twelve. (In law the percentage was twenty-eight in 1928-29.) Serious objection is raised by Jewish leaders to this *numerus clausus*, and one can understand why. But not to introduce it would create worse trouble. Young men would be admitted to studies, from which they would not have the slightest chance of getting a living. Poland is not willed to have half of its doctors and lawyers coming from a Minority of another faith, and another tradition.

A proper picture of what is going on in Polish schools—among which will be found special ones for defectives, for the deaf and dumb, as well as experimental schools for various purposes, such as camp-schools in summer months, can only be had from visiting them. Those who do so will get many a welcome surprise, though one should know what things were like, in 1918, in order to appreciate the progress

made. An approach is being made to having the school serve life, and in all its aspects; something that was too little understood anywhere in Victorian days.

There is a shadow side to it all: the too heavy burden devolving on a courageous, and badly under-paid teaching body—men and women, who are carrying far more than their share of the task of implementing Polish liberties. The school task alone is “a man’s job”, but thousands of teachers would throw up their caps with relief if their day ended there. In endless cases the teacher is the one person in the community who has some vision of a better Poland, and of how to get it. Outside work of many kinds, even to serving the cause of political parties, is often very heavy, and furloughs are unknown. More and more the school is a vital factor in community life, and this is as it should be. But, for the present at least, the older generation is still shy about taking hold, and awkward when it does. In time home and school and church will team up together as they ought. Meantime, the teachers carry on, and the results of their work are already being seen.

Cultural Agencies

Many auxiliaries have come to be employed in modern society to help the foundation institutions just named to do their work. They range from clubs and associations of every kind, to the press, and now the wireless. Older people recall vividly the Self-Improvement Societies of fifty years ago, which were often crude but at least had the virtue of making people do things instead of merely looking on or listening. A moment’s reflection will show the reader how far the Poles, having no state or national institutions, had to rely on the “inner line” of forces, whether for the nurturing of their own traditions, or to set up defences against outside aggression.

As a result, wherever cultural and social organisation was possible, the tendency was to go too far. Too many bodies came into existence, often in unnecessary competition with one another. More zeal than wisdom was

shown, and an emphasis on particularism, where something that would draw people into larger unities would have been better.

Under pre-war conditions, the Church was almost the only instrument that could serve the ends of social integration. In its name was done what was forbidden in the name of the nation. In many cases both education and recreation (what there was of it!) were the concern of the clergy. This was true even of the press, to the uses of which we shall return below. Two most useful institutions, existing even to-day, were (1) the Sokols (falcons), similar to the Czech model, who in the name of athletics did a great deal of work for the mind and the spirit as well; and (2) The Folk-Theatre Societies, which became a most useful tool for national self-preservation, as well as a valuable medium of expression for young and old. The Poles are born actors, and the demand for one-act plays dealing with every phase and aspiration of life challenged the abilities of some of the ablest dramatists of the pre-war generation.

In the new state the threat has been that too many agencies working for "up-lift" both in town and country, have had forced upon them the colour of some political party. If not of a party, at least of an ideology—*pro* this and *anti* that. As a result there are not enough agencies cutting across the differences between Catholics and Socialists, or peasants and townsmen. There are not enough social bridges. In Poland as elsewhere the antagonisms between Left and Right tend to become sharper; the efforts to compel people into one camp or another more insistent. Common platforms do exist, of which among the youth the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides are a good example, the Polish Y.M.C.A. another. In these organisations party politics is tabu, and the prevailing wish is to serve the cause of the individual and through him of the nation as a whole.

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The Polish press deserves a study all by itself. Over two hundred years of unbroken tradition lie behind it,

and the nineteenth century providing a testing time such as no other nation in Europe experienced. It is not a fair judgment to call this press venal, just as it is quite untrue to say that it has been throttled for years by a dictatorship. Only those can make such statements who do not read the Polish newspapers. Among 190 daily papers of all kinds published in Poland (1936-37), there are good and bad, sober and intoxicated, cultured and vulgar. There are dull journals and exciting ones, there is no lack of variety. A few are church dailies, but the vast majority are secular. In the main they serve as organs of political groups, though some of them are purely business enterprises. No country in Europe has a better daily of its kind than *Czas* (The Times), published now in Warsaw; none has a more "go-getting" character than the *Cracow Illustrated Courier*. Equally notable is the *Endek Poznan Courier*, which for seventy years has held aloft the torch of Catholic Polish opinion, in the face of Bismarck and Bülow as well as under the new conditions. The *Polish Gazette* of Warsaw is the recognised organ of the present regime and reveals a high level of workmanship. The *Polish Courier* is now the organ of big industry. Mention should also be made of the *Wilno Word*, whose editor has been for years the stormy petrel of Polish journalism. After a long advocacy of closer relations with Germany, he has suddenly turned to the very opposite.

Next to the dailies come twice as many weeklies of all kinds—illustrated, literary, comic, artistic, trade, technical, etc.; and again twice as many monthlies. Of the latter there are nearly one thousand, many of which, like the corresponding quarterlies are purely scientific in content, while others are read by a wider public. A notable feature of this weekly and monthly output is the portion destined for the use and enjoyment of youth. Another large fraction serves the ends of meditation and devotion. Each of the churches has its own publications, appearing in different parts of the country. Warsaw, as might be expected, has the lion's share of the publishing business. Out of 2,500 different journals in 1936, exactly one thousand

were printed in the capital. On the other hand, less than one-quarter of the dailies appeared there.

As noted, most of the daily papers and some of the weeklies show clear political affiliation. In their technique they reflect the journalism of France more than that of any other European country. Nevertheless there has been a distinct trend to lessen the amount of space given to the exposition of views, and to increase the dimensions of the news sections after the English and American fashion. A totally new departure is the growing space given to sports and games. Of course, as elsewhere, those who read only one journal come to have a set of stereotyped opinions with regard to church and state and school, as well as the social order, the existing government, or the international situation. For this sort of thing there is no specific, not even the censor can do much about it. In Poland, as in other lands, the wish of most editors is to give reliable news and to educate its public on vital matters. It is true, on the other hand, that the need to sell the journal tempts all but the hardiest betimes into writing what people want to hear, rather than what they ought to hear.

The expansion of Polish Radio has been phenomenal, and its uses as a public institution for all kinds of constructive causes are legion. In 1928 Poland passed the first hundred thousand receiving sets; ten years later the number was nearly nine hundred thousand. To-day it is over a million. Of course this is only one-eighth of the number the U.K. or of Germany, but it is one-third that of France; and it should not be forgotten that a large number of these sets are in Community Houses, thus serving whole villages of listeners.

Poland has ten sending stations, and the range of their programmes compares favourably with our own. In 1937 nearly 40,000 hours were offered, of which over half were music, just over one-tenth lectures, and half as many more literary hours of one sort or another. A recent Monday afternoon's programme, taken at random, was like this:

3 p.m. Story, 3.30 Dinner Music, 4.00 News, 4.20 a Chapter of History, 4.35 Folk Music, 4.55 Work as a Theme

for Literature, 5.10 Dialogue: "The Month of Lilacs and Nightingales", with music, 5.50 Talk on the Baltic—Black Sea Canal.

Plenty of variety here, at the hour when people who have worked right through until three are taking life easily.

This brings us to the theatre, the opera, and to man's and woman's latest weapon for killing time—the cinema. No one needs to be told of the genius for and love of music which are inherent in the Polish people. What may not be known is the extent to which the state seeks to promote the production of good music as part of its calling. A notable feature of this, which attracts friends from all over the world, is the annual Contest in Warsaw in the interpretation of the music of Chopin. So, too, with the opera, and the drama. There are state and city theatres everywhere, and every school or club has its stage. Native-born writers get their share of attention, but foreign ones are welcomed in translation. Some of Shaw's plays appeared in Warsaw before being produced in London. The same is true of the works of Hungarian, Czech, Italian, French or German dramatists. Comedy is more popular than tragedy. "Pickwick Papers" in dramatic form was a great success a short time back; so in its time was "Charley's Aunt".

To reach the masses one must turn to the cinema. The uses made of it for entertainment and edification are legion. Native Polish film production is still young, but some fine things have been done. Pola Negri is only a sample of the talent to be found there. The field here to be explored is enormous, and its possibilities for bringing not only the rest of their own country but also the world outside to the eyes and ears of the simple peasant folk, are enormous. Just as card-playing was the defence of the old-time landed gentry against the boredom and monotony of the long winters, so the cinema can easily become a far more valuable source of enjoyment and profit to the masses in our own day.

Two other institutions of a different sort, are being used in Poland in increasing dimensions for the education of both old and young—popular libraries and museums. In

the latter are included of course, art galleries, and no finer example can be found on the Continent than the new National Museum opened a year ago in Warsaw. The number of these institutions is not yet large, but every year sees an increase. One of the purposes of the schools is to teach children to love the reading of good books. By the same token whole classes are taken regularly as a part of their week's work to visit the galleries and the museums, and see with their own eyes what they hear about in the classroom. A speciality is made in every larger city of folk museums, where the quaint costumes of the country side, peasant arts and crafts and everything pertaining to the treasured past of the nation are set forth with rare artistic skill. One of the finest of these in the country is to be found in the quite modern city of Katowice. The interest of wider circles in exhibitions which show what is going on to-day in the land, was shown by the fact that a series of rooms containing plans, drawings and models of the Warsaw of the Future was visited last summer by over half a million people.

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The great range of auxiliary institutions of higher learning in science, in letters, in the fine arts, and in technical fields, must be dismissed with a single word. Poland has an Academy of Sciences in Cracow, with an enviable record of nearly seventy years of discussion and of publication behind it. The new Academy of Literature in Warsaw is still young, but is doing a useful task. In Lwow is the world-famous Osolinski Institute with a gallery, a notable library—containing many precious manuscripts and documents, and a publishing department whose services to the national cause are legion. In the capital are the Mianowski Foundation for the advancement of science, which would be a wealthy institution if its holdings in Caucasian oil had not been seized by the Bolsheviks; and the National Culture Funds, one of whose special cares is the sending of scholars abroad for research and travel. It may be noted in passing that the Kosciuszko Foundation in New York

City, a miniature Rhodes Trust created by the Poles of the New World, has for fourteen years been furthering an exchange of students and professors between Poland and the U.S.A.

The time is past when the outside world thought of Poles as being distinguished men of letters or musicians, or even philosophers, but having no interest in or capacity for what would be called the practical side of life. The nation stands to-day on an equal footing with its neighbours, and sharing the same responsibilities in a workaday world as they. But arts and letters and sciences are not forgotten, and the years to come bid fair to enhance the reputation of the past in this respect.

CHAPTER XIII

FOREIGN RELATIONS

POLAND came into her own again on the ruins of the three empires that had partitioned her. The frontiers of the new state were determined in part by the 1919 treaties, in part by settlement at Riga two years later. The view that some have professed, that both in the case of Poland and in that of other new republics, something artificial was created by the Powers for political reasons, is too foolish to be discussed. Every one of them came into being because of the survival of a people with its own speech and culture, right through the period of imperialism; and the conviction that this gave that people the right to its own sovereign state. We have seen how the exertions of the Polish nation, notably during the trying war years contributed in a very tangible way to its liberation.

Still, it was to be expected that all three empires should resent what happened. Austria-Hungary ceased to be, so there was no problem in this direction. The new Russia was a quite different "person" from the old, having ideological ideas and ideals rather than political; and being set on the task of the internal development of her vast potentialities rather than on any territorial aggression. The Treaty of Riga afforded a basis for correct relations between the two new republics, though no one pretends that the Soviets were satisfied with every part of it. On her part Poland had to be watchful so long as the crusading propensities of the Comintern seemed to take precedence over the proper concerns of the Soviet Union as such. For some years no cordiality existed between Warsaw and Moscow, but rather coolness. The Soviets looked on Poland as the

first outpost of capitalism, while the latter had reason to know that any efforts to extend the creed of Communism would probably strike her first.

The real trouble was elsewhere—with the new republic known as “Weimar” Germany; whose protests against the new frontiers, and demands for revision were trumpeted to all the world right through the twenties, and could more than once have led Europe again into war. Because it strikes the eye so readily, the “Corridor” was given most attention; and a whole train of imagined rather than real ills connected with the severance of East Prussia on the map from the rest of the Reich. What Poland had to fear most, however, was not any attack from the German side, but the community of ideas and ideals existing then between Berlin and Moscow; coupled with the collaboration known to be going on between the General Staffs of two huge neighbours. She herself had prevented a coming together of the two in 1920, but the attempt might at any time be renewed. This danger remained until the coming of the National Socialists into power in 1933.

“Nobody knows Poland’s policy!” was the comment of Lord Balfour in the early part of 1920. This was quite true, for as yet the Poles did not know themselves. Nor could they be expected to, so long as the international horizon did not clear. Even when peace had come, apart from allegiance to the League of Nations, regarded by all Poles as the guarantor of the new order in Europe, time was necessary in order to see how things stood. Further, so long as the constant changing of Ministers went on, a consistent policy was very difficult indeed.

Poland’s relations with her neighbour states have been dictated above all by her geographical position. This is one of the most difficult, because most exposed, in Europe. As a result relations with neighbours must be constantly under consideration, and only mutual goodwill can at any time assure freedom from anxiety. We have seen how the recovery by the Poles of their own sovereign state was bound to call forth resentment; and the policy that Pilsudski set about establishing after 1926 in regard to his neighbours

has been the object of sharp criticism. Some of this criticism has been directed rather at the way things were done than at what has been done. Much of it has been borne personally by Minister Beck; though the blame should have really been placed on his master, the Marshal.

The cardinal points of this foreign policy can be summed up very briefly.

(i) Collaboration inside the framework of the League of Nations with all Powers aiming at collective security. (Poland was one of the first to acclaim the Briand-Kellogg Anti-war Pact.)

(ii) A resolve to enter into no undertakings not vital to Poland's own interests, or which she might not be able to carry out.

(iii) A refusal to be the "hand-maid" of any other Power or combination of Powers, for ends not her own.

(iv) The view that peace in Europe is one and indivisible, and

(v) The conviction that, for Poland, as for any other state, the first consideration must be her own safety.

The reasons for and implications of these five points are not hard to understand.

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Rightly or wrongly, Poland was disposed to think of the League as the instrument for bringing into being a new international order, based not on physical force but on mind and spirit. In time she realised that none of the Great Powers was whole-heartedly behind this courageous adventure, and that the two chief ones—Britain and France—were by no means pulling together. Then came the withdrawal of Japan, followed by that of Nazi Germany. It was now abundantly clear that the League could no longer hope to enforce its will against lawbreakers, if, indeed, it could survive at all, even as a discussion group. In proportion as the authority of Geneva waned, Warsaw saw itself compelled to resort to bilateral agreements, and to an increasing dependence on her own initiative and strength. More fortunately situated countries can wait,

and hope that something will turn up. An exposed land like Poland does this at its peril, as Pilsudski well knew.

From the outset the new state regarded itself as belonging geographically, and politically, to the Baltic Basin, and in no way to the Danubian region. Between her and the Succession states lay the Carpathians, and only a small part of Poland had belonged to Austria-Hungary. For that reason she was right in not joining the Little Entente, whose commitments seemed to Warsaw too far-reaching. A prompt alliance with France (within the framework of the League), and a complementary one with Roumania—directed against possible invasion from the east, were her one and only essays in diplomacy. At the same time, as we saw, Warsaw sought every means of promoting friendly conversations with her neighbours in the Baltic Basin; a policy which was crowned with some finality in March 1938 when Lithuania, long unwilling to share in these conversations, composed her differences with Poland, and is now in line with the rest.

It was soon seen by Polish statesmen that the alliance with post-war France had no satisfactory basis. Poland was considered by the Quai d'Orsay as a servant, not as a partner. One French statesman put it in a slightly different way: "As for Poland, we are carrying her in our arms!" Whether this was the case might be debated, in any case Warsaw became restless as early as 1924, and began to make it clear that such a condition of affairs could not go on. When the change came in Polish politics in May 1926, the unwillingness of Poland to take orders from Paris became even more evident, and the alliance was thought by many to be moribund. The coolness that crept in had very good grounds. What was called with bated breath "Locarno" had the fine desire to relieve the tension of the Rhine, but the strong suspicion was present that it cared nothing for what might happen on the Vistula. It is a fact, as one historian pointed out, that in proportion as the tendencies in France grew to be reconciled with Germany, the attitude of the Reich toward Poland became the more aggressive. Such was the general result of the

Briand-Stresemann flirtation, which prepared the evacuation of the Rhineland, as well as of the plans for a Four Power Pact in 1933. This last provoked quite as sharp protests from the Little Entente as from Poland. *Nihil de nobis sine nobis!* Without us, nothing about us! was the cry.

The course of events during these years, coupled with his concern at the lack of political stability in France itself, strengthened Pilsudski in his conviction that, while good relations with all lands were to be fostered, too much trusting of any Power was unsafe. He knew how bitterly his country had repented her reliance on diplomacy in the nineteenth century, and that at bottom the one thing that guarantees any nation is its own character. He therefore went quietly on with his training of the citizen army Poland might one day need, and at the same time formulated more clearly Poland's foreign orientation. There soon emerged what has been called the policy of neutrality, or equilibrium; with Poland desirous of keeping the gates between two hostile and more powerful neighbours, and associating with her all the smaller states—from Finland to Roumania, who constitute a sort of geographical "cordon". Although it was a development of, rather than a change from, the former line, the Marshal preferred a new Foreign Minister, and Joseph Beck succeeded August Zaleski at the end of 1932.

A beginning of this new policy had already been made in the previous January, when a Non-Aggression Agreement, conceived as a concrete realisation of the Briand-Kellogg Pact, was signed between Poland and the Soviets. It has been regularly renewed ever since, and has done seven years of service to European stability and peace. The opportunity was soon to come to attempt a similar arrangement with Nazi Germany. By launching its campaign of persecution of "undesirable" elements in the country, and by leaving the League, the Third Reich had more or less isolated itself, and Pilsudski was not slow to seize the opportunity. After months of quiet negotiations, with Poland holding the better cards, the famous Declaration of January 26, 1934, was ready; by which Germany confirmed

the existing frontiers and called off her demands for revision, a ten-year term was set during which war would be outlawed between the two countries, and provision made for settling by negotiations all out-standing differences.

Few things since the Great War have taken Europe so completely by surprise. Not even the journalists, who usually know everything, had suspected it; and books that were in the press telling how Danzig would be the cause of a war within three months had suddenly to be recalled. The gains for Poland were immense. What Zaleski had tried for years to get, but in vain, was now conceded—though the Reichstag was anything but enthusiastic when told about the scheme. As Pilsudski had seen, a clearing of the air with Germany could only come when a strong enough government existed in Berlin to override public sentiment, in order to gain concrete ends. But Poland's international position was changed at once by this settlement. The French were angry, asking how could anyone do any business with a neighbour of that sort; and there has been a constant stream of criticism ever since from certain circles, claiming that Poland has been for five years the abettor of Nazi plans in Europe.

To the first charge, Poland could calmly reply that she had done everything possible to get Paris to realise the danger to peace and security in Central Europe from the Nazi imperialism, but in vain. There was, then, nothing for it but to make the best terms she could for herself. To the second charge, Warsaw has had to shrug her shoulders, and say in effect, "Wait and see!" The fact simply is that Poland looked in vain both in Paris and in London for any sign either of life or of understanding in regard to the whole resurgence of a hyper-national Germany. France seemed afraid, Britain bound by her traditional "muddle-along" policy, or, at times, by a marked friendliness with the Hitler regime. In view of this, Pilsudski could not temporise.

A mild sample of French criticism were some famous words about Poland being "equivocal in its attitudes",

which were sharply resented on the Vistula. One English expert, a friend of Poland, said to me, he felt that the Poles were too little ready to co-operate ! I had to rejoin that there seemed to be no one for them to co-operate with. No one in western Europe could make up his mind.

Charges were brought that behind the Declaration there were secret clauses, amounting in effect to an alliance with the Third Reich. These were denied, but the convictions have persisted, and been the cause of a good deal of misunderstanding. Common sense should have told such people that nothing like an alliance either with the Germans on the west or with the Soviets on the east, was possible for Poland. To ally herself with one would mean courting the enmity of the other. This Poland is resolved to avoid at all costs, for much the same reason as she opposed the plan for an "East Locarno" some years back. She will recognise no agreements which bind her in advance to admit the armies of any foreign power on to Polish territory, in order to fight any other !

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The year 1934 brought the troubles in Austria, with the death of Dollfuss. It began to be clear that the German "offensive" so long expected against Poland, might go southward down the Danube instead. The insinuation that this happened on Poland's suggestion is simply silly. It cannot be denied, however, that while in no way relaxing her vigilance, Poland took a long breath for the first time in years. For half a generation she had been the object of attacks and reproaches, on various grounds; now they ceased. It seemed too good to be true.

March 1935 brought the denunciation of the Versailles Treaty, and the announcement that Germany would proceed to rearm according to her own needs. Earlier offers at limitation having been ignored, the Nazis made no more. The autumn brought the invasion of Abyssinia, the spring of 1936 the reoccupation by the German armies of the Rhineland. On news of this, Warsaw at once communicated with Paris, saying in effect: "If you are going to

march, we shall march too; but if you are going to talk, then we shall continue our own policy, as before !”

By now the direction Nazi plans were taking became patent to all save the wilfully blind. They were being watched by every chancery in Europe, by none more closely than that on Wierzbowa Street in Warsaw. Voices were heard in the Polish press, hinting that while Poland had been the great gainer from the early stages of the agreement with Berlin, the whole face of things was changing. Now the Nazis, their backs being safe, were free to do what they liked elsewhere, and so to build themselves into a very formidable power. Alongside these comments went others, expressing wonder why—notably in view of what was happening in Spain, neither France nor England seemed to be awake to realities.

Poland herself had not been idle. Profiting from an invitation in the autumn of 1936, Marshal Smigly-Rydz made an official visit to Paris—just as his predecessor had done fourteen years before; and the Franco-Polish alliance was rehabilitated. Not only that, but a substantial French loan was arranged to enable Poland to modernise larger units of her army. I'm not giving away military secrets, when I say that from this time the plans for the defence of Poland's western frontiers underwent a complete change.

Apart from the slaughter in Spain, the year 1937 was relatively quiet in Europe. It was a time of preparation on the one hand, and of waiting on the other. March 1938 brought the sudden occupation of Austria—something which, if done in another form, would have been taken years ago as a matter of course. Polish opinion was divided, her official policy much that of the United Kingdom—“there is nothing to be done about it”. She took advantage of a frontier incident at this time to send an ultimatum—not of war but of peace, to Lithuania; saying that the time had come to end the nonsense, and open the “dead” frontier between the two countries. The show of force made Lithuanian acceptance easier, and a new era has opened up in that part of Europe. Many papers

condemned the "bullying" practices of Poland, mostly from ignorance of the facts and of the motives behind them.

October brought the real "crisis"—Munich, and the disarming of Czechoslovakia. For weeks it looked as though Poland was the ally of Berlin in this nefarious enterprise. She had one definite demand on Prague, the return of the part of the Teschen area the Czechs had seized when the Poles were helpless early in 1919; after a settlement had been made in the previous November by the two parties on the spot. An ultimatum at the end of September brought an answer from Dr. Benesh in the affirmative, and the territory in question was taken over by the Poles just in time to keep the Nazi troops out. All this looked both unkind and unjust; but the appearance and the reality are different. The Poles saw further than those who condemned their action, and saved 120,000 of their own people as well as fifty miles of one of the trunk railway lines of Central Europe from getting into Nazi hands. It should be added that, in spite of the demands of the Polish press for "annexation", not a foot was taken back beyond what had been agreed on as the frontier on November 5, 1918.

With the over-running of Czechoslovakia, a new situation arose for Poland; something that might almost be called "encirclement". Not only on the north, but on the west, but also along her southern borders, was she faced by Nazi Germany. What was more, the way was open for the latter to enter Roumania, and approach the Black Sea. This way led through the tiny land inhabited by one branch of the Ruthenian people, belonging formerly to Hungary, but included in Czechoslovakia after the war. In order to offer a check to this advance eastward Poland and Hungary proposed that it should be returned to the latter. All the fertile parts were taken anyway, as being "Magyar", leaving a tiny highland strip, poor and without moral or material support anywhere; without even an approach by railway save through Hungary or Poland. As all know, an effort at self-government (under Nazi dictation) was made by Msgr. Volosin, until the seizing of the rump of Czechoslovakia this last March. The Hungarians then acted,

and a common frontier with Poland was established on the ridge of the eastern Carpathians. This erects a barrier here to anyone approaching northern Roumania, or the rich lands of the Ukraine.

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Poland's "neutrality" policy has been under fire in her home press for some time. In a long tour of investigation made in 1936, I found roughly that most Poles east of the Vistula were in favour of it, but that those west of the Vistula, knowing the Germans better, would shake their heads. Among them too lurked suspicions that secret clauses may have hidden behind the Pact, or at least secret understandings by which Poland was being led up the garden path. If Minister Beck made a mistake, it was in keeping his counsels too much; in being the least talkative diplomatic Head in Europe. One may perhaps forgive him for this, in a time when talking has been indulged in till we are tired of it; but he could not be surprised if he won for himself the name of "the Sphinx". The charges that he was pursuing not a Polish policy, but a German, are, of course, without any foundation.

Again, one word on general principles. Poland has regretted as much as Britain the dividing of Europe into two ideological "camps", and had desired above all not to be forced into either. Further, she has refrained just as firmly from joining the Franco-Soviet-Czechoslovak Agreement, simply because for her to do so would have meant giving Berlin real grounds for raising the cry of "encirclement". This she has been resolved to avoid, at least with herself as the villain of the piece. Since the recent Anglo-Polish alliance it has come anyway, but with Britain as the villain instead. Taking Hitler at his word, the Poles found that he could keep it when he would, even in a difficult matter like Danzig. At the same time they have not refrained from sharp warnings where necessary: witness the message sent in November, when thousands of immigrant Jews were dumped in brutal fashion on the Polish boundary at Zbonszyn.

From 1926 onward Poland has demanded from all her neighbours only one thing: that they treat her formally as an equal, and not as an upstart. This has been no easy thing for the Germans to learn, after generations of training to think of all Slavs as their inferiors. A big change has come over the whole Central European scene, since the German people realised that they had no longer a loosely-constituted empire on their eastern borders, but a closely-knit and resolute national state. With this state they can be good neighbours, if they wish to; but not on terms that are dictated by one side alone. To the crux of the matter, which is the mouth of the Vistula river, we shall come back in the next chapter.

For a fuller account of Poland's place in world affairs the reader is referred to Dr. Buell's new book.¹ Only two or three matters can be mentioned here in conclusion.

No country in Europe needs good relations with her neighbours more than Poland. Not only because of her position at the geographical centre of the continent, but because she is exposed more than any other of the larger Powers. Further, because she is still a junior partner, and needs to go to school to others. But there are greater reasons yet. Poland needs, and asks for, the collaboration of other Powers in the solution of her two major problems—already mentioned above. A poor country, she has by far the largest percentage of Jews of any land in the world—a state of things that should not go on. An agricultural country, she has a population which grows beyond her means to support it, save on the lines of industrialisation; and for this she needs access to raw materials, at prices she can afford to pay. To deny help with either of these major matters, would be short-sighted and foolish. It can be given on lines that will serve all parties, and will signally contribute to world stability and peace.

Whether Poland can establish a claim to colonies is a matter on which I am not competent to speak. But the suggestion is at least in order that, should the time come

¹ This splendid book reached me only when my own MS. was completed. It will remain a standard work for some time.

when a general overhauling of the relations of Europe—overcrowded Europe, to the still undeveloped and underpopulated parts of the world is contemplated, Poland's voice should not be refused a hearing. Her emigrants in many lands have proved their worth; they are not afraid of work, and this is the best means yet found for exploiting the riches of mother earth still untapped.

The claims of some Poles that their country is already a Great Power do not interest me. Time will tell. But no one can deny that as things stand Poland is a great power, either for peace or the reverse, in European affairs. That alone is an achievement no people, whose sovereign state is coming of age as I write, need be ashamed of. Those who refuse to reckon with this fact do so at their peril.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LATEST PHASE

THE body of this little book was finished in the first days of May. Significant events were then in progress, which call for attention as it goes to press five weeks later. In a certain sense there is nothing in the new situation which alters the essential facts recorded above. Nevertheless, when in his speech of April 28 Chancellor Hitler denounced both the Ten Year Pact with Poland and the Naval Agreement with Britain, he did make history. Psychologically, at least, the Polish nation and state entered on a new phase of its relations with neighbouring countries, for things were now clear that had been veiled before. The mask was off.

The Pact of Non-aggression had been variously received in Poland in 1934. On the one hand there were optimists, who could point to the distinct gains accruing to Poland; and who were encouraged, as time went on, by Hitler's statements about a correction of the age-old idea that Germans and Poles could never be good neighbours. On the other, there were the pessimists, who said that the whole thing was only a game; and that nothing of permanent value could be built on it. The government in Warsaw were well aware of both views, which were regularly aired in the press; but they held to their course, taking Berlin at its word. At the same time they have never for a moment relaxed vigilance, but watched every move on the chess-board with care.

One can see now that the pessimists were right (though that fact in no way means that Polish policy has been wrong!). The course of events has shown the real nature

of the Nazi view as to the proper status of all non-German peoples in Central Europe. Only the appearance of political, economic, and cultural independence can be allowed to them, but not the reality. In other words they may be satellites, but nothing more. Above all, and especially with regard to Foreign Policy. No state in Central Europe may enter on or maintain any relationship with any other power, unless and until it has permission from Berlin. The Czechs would not surrender this right, and so "they paid the penalty". Poland was next in order, and Beck's visit to London was conceived of in Berlin as a direct affront to the wishes of the Third Reich. This then is the face of things when the vizard has been lifted: something totally different, as the Poles see it, from the spirit and letter of the Pact of January 1934. Again the worthlessness of a scrap of paper has been demonstrated, and the words of national leaders are likely to be less trusted in Europe than ever.

All the world knows what a plain, though brief and dignified, reply was given to Hitler by the Polish Foreign Minister on May 7. In it there was said just what needed saying, and in a way that no one could fail to understand. For the first time, a neighbour people stood up to Nazi demands, reminding the Germans and the world that other peoples had the same right to "living room" as they had. For our purpose the important thing is, that this plain statement of policy was welcomed by the whole Polish nation with sober enthusiasm. Everyone knew what the risk was, but no one for a moment hesitated to take it. Party differences were buried, thanks both to what the German Chancellor had said, and to the things the Nazis had done. As for the non-Polish Minorities, out of ten millions belonging to them, at least nine are solidly behind their government.

Spontaneous assurances of support flooded in from every corner of the country, and from every class of the community. The College of Bishops issued an appeal to all believers to stand firmly for their country and their faith. Representatives of the press of every persuasion went in a

delegation to the Prime Minister, in order to declare a truce in respect to internal conflicts, until the threat from abroad was removed. Along with this came the voluntary return to Poland of nearly all the political refugees, including the veteran peasant leader, Vitos.

By a curious irony the political Groups of the right, stemming from the pre-war Endek Party of Dmowski, which have been through the years in constant hostility to the Pilsudski regime, have no choice to-day but to join in the general acclamation. The reason is that the pet dogma of this Party has always been antagonism to Berlin, and closer relations with Russia. There is therefore a measure of justice in their claim, that what is being realised before their eyes is the very policy they themselves have always advocated. In view of all these facts no one need be surprised to learn that, poor as the Polish nation is and heavily taxed as are her people, the Air Defence Loan, already referred to in a previous chapter, brought in the imposing sum of 400,000,000 zlotys—at least three times as much as ever was expected.

Along with these evidences of unity and resolution inside Poland, have gone other events, no less significant. Samples are the visits to Warsaw of the Lithuanian Commander-in-Chief, General Rashkitis, and that of the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, M. Potemkin. In this connection it is notable that after a long break, there is again a Soviet Ambassador resident in Warsaw. These events are only part of the picture of general "alarm", and the measures taken to meet it, that have followed as a direct result on the seizure of Czechoslovakia on March 15. Lack of space does not permit me to discuss the importance of the part Soviet Russia ought to play at this critical time. Two things only can be said:

1. The nervousness of the new republics, from Finland southward to the kingdom of Roumania, about accepting military help from their colossal neighbour to the east, should be better understood in England in order that the right way may be speedily found for removing it. For
2. a Peace Front, including Moscow and prepared for every

emergency, is the most likely means—as things stand to-day, of keeping the dictators from plunging Europe into an Armageddon.

For Poland, which is our concern at this moment, the whole crisis can be said to be centred on the status of Danzig. Put another way, it concerns the condition of things that is to prevail at the mouth of the Vistula—Poland's one great river. About this issue the simple facts must be given, and they can be stated very briefly.

When the experts reported unanimously to the Peace Conference in 1919 that Danzig should be given to Poland, they did not get their way. Instead it was made into a Free City—an important concession to the then generally proclaimed principle of self-determination. In other words, a working compromise between the German and Polish claims was accepted, and no sober observer of the sequel can deny that the results have vindicated the wisdom of that decision. I should like to go even further. Had the relations of the German people of Danzig not been constantly clouded by interference from Berlin—in the 'twenties by the Weimar Republic quite as much as by the Nazis since 1933, we should have had a sample of international co-operation serving the vital interests of both parties concerned, which could be a lesson to Europe. Danzig's historic rôle, determined by its geographical position, has been clear to all students of history for 700 years. She is the natural seaport of a great *hinterland*, and only a perverse fate made the city German while the *hinterland* was and is Slav. Can the mere difference of speech and national tradition be overcome?

The answer is a resounding "yes", provided that one thing is kept out of the picture, viz: power politics. The city can remain German and flourish both materially and culturally, as it never did in pre-war Prussian days; while at the same time serving the vital interests of the 35,000,000 inhabitants of the Polish Commonwealth. It can not do this if it becomes a part of the Nazi Reich. A glance at the map will suffice to show why. Danzig in Nazi hands controls Poland's one and only outlet to the sea. To say

that the Reich might get it but not make of it a military stronghold, or that guarantees could be exacted from the Nazi regime to this effect, and to imagine that Poland would accept this solution, is simple folly. Experience has shown that things do not work that way. Gdynia, which shares with Danzig the ocean-going commerce of Poland (and that means four-fifths of her whole foreign trade), was built because of the lessons of the year 1920. Together the two ports stand: together, as Poland's window on the world, they fall.

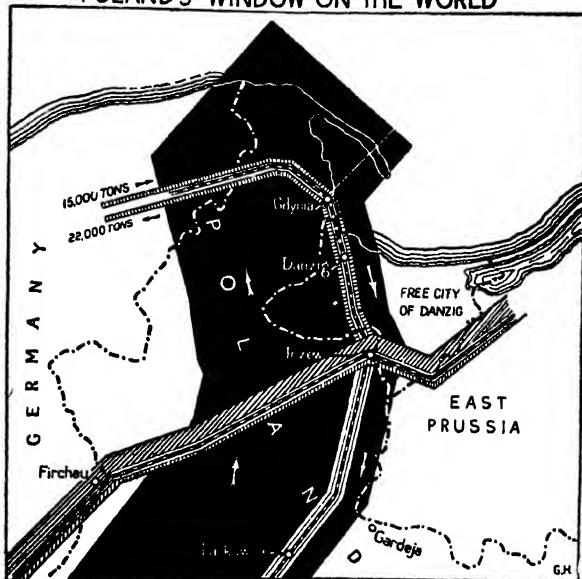
We know now that Hitler would have followed up his occupation of Prague and Memel with the seizure of Danzig, had not the prompt and determined action of the Polish authorities stopped it. Since that time the Polish army is on war footing; Danzig is guarded on three sides, and this state of things will continue as long as it is necessary. *Tertium non datur!* It costs the Polish people a million pounds a week—a burden they ought not to have to bear, but there is no choice.¹ The defence of Danzig was entrusted to Poland by the League, and in case of any trouble it will be treated just as if it were an integral part of Pomerania—called familiarly “the Corridor”. Again a glance at the map will show why it must be so.

The accompanying diagram shows graphically what the conflicting claims to this province look like. In the one case the line of communication and traffic is from west to east, in the other it is from south to north. They cross at right angles, and so can only then not give rise to open conflict, if there is resolve on both sides to settle all difficulties in conference. But the diagram also shows the true proportion of the need. In 1929 the volume of south-north traffic was *eight times* that of the east-west traffic. Ten years later the ratio is higher. As Polish economic expansion continues, it will go higher yet.

The Nazi claim to Danzig is very simple. German people have the “right” to belong to Germany! Stated

¹As we go to press a Polish Delegation is in London discussing the possibilities of a sterling loan, to help finance the extra burdens of the hour.

POLAND'S WINDOW ON THE WORLD



- Exports from Poland and into Poland through Danzig and Gdynia
Total - 11,900,000 tons
- Transit Traffic from Germany to East Prussia and vice versa through Polish Pommerania Total - 1,402,000 tons Figures for 1929

thus baldly, the dictum of course proves too much. It would justify the extremist annexation plans, and actually restore the frontiers of 1914. It might even go farther. But it would ignore the claims of ten times as many non-Germans also to the right to live under their own flag ! The real point is, however, something different. Since March 15 there are no more "rights" in Central Europe, and the Nazis themselves are to blame. The slogan of Wilson, which Hitler loves to use, must first be applied where the injustice is grossest—to the Czechs and Slovaks.

Not that the same principle, applied to Danzig, would at once be valid ! There is nothing in the present deadlock that was not clearly understood in those post-war days when all peace-makers were talking "self-determination". Yet we know what the decision was, and what the reasons. Poland's position is vastly improved since then, and so has her claim to the use of Danzig without fear of interruption. The twenty years of *condominium* in the Free City, watched over by a neutral Commissioner, have served all concerned well, and can continue to serve them. No vital German interest has been sacrificed, nor need it be. On the other hand, the alternative demanded by Berlin is wholly unacceptable to Poland. No man in his right mind will sign his own death-warrant.

Of course, there is more in all this than Poland's right to live. By the end of March Danzig had become the focus-point of Nazi aspirations to world dominion: the first bastion of defence for the democratic peoples. Hence the declaration of the British Prime Minister in the House of Commons, which was repeated a few days later in sharpened form; by which British policy was reversed as it has rarely been in history. Hence too the alliance with Poland concluded a fortnight later. It is not a question of "fighting for Danzig", much as the Nazis would like to make it that. It is one of fighting, if necessary, for Holland, or the Isle of Wight, or St. John's Wood. Those who do not, at long last, see this clearly, must be either blind or perverse. Buell puts it thus: "Britain has indicated

that its frontier will henceforth be on the Vistula, in addition to the Rhine."

Although no one can foresee what may happen next, nor yet how or when it will happen, the fact remains that the most exposed country and people in Europe, as I write, are the Poles. Their frontier is only twenty minutes by fast plane from Berlin—a fact that the Nazis particularly deplore. Nevertheless, they are probably the coolest and least flurried of all the neighbours of the Reich—because their minds are made up. If attacked, they will fight; asking no one for advice, and expecting no quarter. The spirit in which they are facing a crisis in their existence, even more serious than that of 1920, is beyond praise. An expression of it was given already three years ago by Marshal Smigly-Rydz, which deserves to be perpetuated in English:

"Where the defence of our country is concerned, everything needful will be found: a solution for our economic difficulties, a way to unleashing the moral and creative powers of the nation, and a way to assembling these powers for service. Finally, a way will be found for calling into being new values and forces, the moment they are required."

Poland has gone forward greatly in the last three years. Both from the point of view of material consolidation, and in the direction of a clearer understanding on the part of the people as a whole as to what the real issues at stake are, matters are far better than they were in 1936. A good thing this, for every ounce of strength may well be needed. What looks like peace to-day makes almost the same demands on men and women as war. Poland knows this quite well.

In the Red Triangle Soldiers' Huts in 1919 and 1920 a poster hung, which made a great impression on all who saw it. A ploughed field, a farmer sowing by hand up and down the furrows, his sword stuck in the ground beside the field, and his coat lying beside the sword. In the background dim forms of civilians and soldiers looking on. The figure of the farmer was that of Marshal Pilsudski.

The allegory was clear then, it is clear to-day. There is work to be done, and the nations would like to devote themselves to that work; but an evil spirit is abroad, disturbing the peace, demanding the right to settle things in a one-sided way, by force or the threat of force. For that reason we have at the moment, in Trotsky's famous phrase "Neither peace nor war!" For the present then Poland, at least, must be a nation in arms.

BOOKS SUGGESTED FOR PART TWO

Concise Statistical Year-Book of Poland, to be had from Embassies or Consulates.

Machray, Robert—*The Poland of Pilsudski* (Allen & Unwin).

Gorecki, Roman—*Poland's Economics* (Allen & Unwin).

Wellisz, L.—*Foreign Capital in Poland* (Allen & Unwin).

Buell, R. L.—*Poland: the Key to Europe* (Knopf, N.Y.C., Cape, London).

Monographs on Poland, 1-4, published by Birmingham University, Slavonic Department.

Augur—*Eagles Black and White* (Appleton), on the "Corridor" problem.

ONE MOMENT PLEASE

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- Richard Aldington *The Colonel's Daughter*
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 Penguin Parade (4)
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 V. Sackville-West *The Edwardians*
 Ansoine de Saint-Exupéry *Night Flight*

Reginald's Choir Treat

"Never," wrote Reginald to his most darling friend, "be a pioneer. It's the Early Christian that gets the fattest lion."

Reginald, in his way, was a pioneer.

None of the rest of his family had anything approaching Titian hair or a sense of humour, and they used primroses as a table decoration.

It follows that they never understood Reginald, who came down late to breakfast, and nibbled toast, and said disrespectful things about the universe. The family ate porridge, and believed in everything, even the weather forecast.

Therefore the family was relieved when the vicar's daughter undertook the reformation of Reginald. Her name was Amabel; it was the vicar's one extravagance. Amabel was accounted a beauty and-intellectually gifted; she never played tennis, and was reputed to have read Maeterlinck's *Life of the Bee*. If you abstain from tennis and read Maeterlinck in a small country village you are of necessity intellectual. Also she had been twice to Fécamp to pick up a good French accent from the Americans staying there; consequently she had a knowledge of the world which might be considered useful in dealings with a worldling.

Hence the congratulations in the family when Amabel undertook the reformation of its wayward member.

Amabel commenced operations by asking her unsuspecting pupil

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Reginald's Choir Treat

(continued)

to tea in the vicarage garden; she believed in the healthy influence of natural surroundings, never having been in Sicily, where things are different.

And like every woman who has ever preached repentance to unregenerate youth, she dwelt on the sin of an empty life, which always seems so much more scandalous in the country, where people rise early to see if a new strawberry has happened during the night.

Reginald recalled the lilies of the field, "which simply sat and looked beautiful, and defied competition."

"But that is not an example for us to follow," gasped Amabel.

"Unfortunately, we can't afford to. You don't know what a world of trouble I take in trying to rival the lilies in their artistic simplicity."

"You are really indecently vain of your appearance. A good life is infinitely preferable to good looks."

"You agree with me that the two are incompatible. I always say beauty is only sin deep."

Amabel began to realize that the battle is not always to the strong-minded. With the immemorial resource of her sex, she abandoned the frontal attack and laid stress on her unassisted labours in parish work, her mental loneliness, her discouragements—and at the right moment she produced strawberries and cream. Reginald was obviously affected by the latter, and when his preceptress suggested that he might begin the strenuous life by helping her to supervise the annual outing of the bucolic infants who composed the local choir, his eyes shone with the dangerous enthusiasm of a convert.

Reginald entered on the strenuous life alone, as far as Amabel was concerned. The most virtuous women are not proof against damp

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Reginald's Choir Treat (continued)

grass, and Amabel kept her bed with a cold. Reginald called it a dispensation; it had been the dream of his life to stage-manage a choir outing. With strategic insight, he led his shy, bullet-headed charges to the nearest woodland stream and allowed them to bathe; then he seated himself on their discarded garments and discoursed on their immediate future, which, he decreed, was to embrace a Bacchanalian procession through the village. Forethought had provided the occasion with a supply of tin whistles, but the introduction of a he-goat from a neighbouring orchard was a brilliant afterthought. Properly, Reginald explained, there should have been an outfit of panther skins; as it was, those who had spotted handkerchiefs were allowed to wear them, which they did with thankfulness. Reginald recognized the impossibility, in the time at his disposal, of teaching his shivering neophytes a chant in honour of Bacchus, so he started them off with a more familiar, if less appropriate, temperance hymn. After all, he said, it is the spirit of the thing that counts. Following the etiquette of dramatic authors on first nights, he remained discreetly in the background while the procession, with extreme diffidence and the goat, wound its way lugubriously towards the village. The singing had died down long before the main street was reached, but the miserable wailing of pipes brought the inhabitants to their doors. Reginald said he had seen something like it in pictures; the villagers had seen nothing like it in their lives, and remarked as much freely.

Reginald's family never forgave him. They had no sense of humour.

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